

THE HOUSE OF WAR

BY

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"VEILED WOMEN," ETC.,

"The world is a comedy to those who think;
a tragedy to those who feel."

HORACE WALPOLE, *Letters*.



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PREFATORY NOTE

"THE House of War" (Dâr ul Harb) was the designation given formerly to all those Christians of the countries conquered by the Muslims who declined to embrace El Islâm. It simply meant that, being technically still at war with the Mahometans, they could not be admitted to full rights of citizenship, and had to pay an annual tribute for their lives, in return for which they had protection and specific rights. But the Christians of the Turkish Empire have now, for several generations, become a House of War in a much wider sense, a development to which the European missionaries, who come and go, have, often inadvertently, contributed.

M. W. P.

THE HOUSE OF WAR

I

BETWEEN the high, mud-plastered walls of flat-roofed houses, with here and there a glimpse of leafy orchards, a never-ending stream of country-people flowed into the Eastern city. The sun had just arisen, spreading shadows as soft and deep and rich of hue as Persian rugs. Behind the tower-like upper storeys and some trees to eastward all was molten gold. Doves were cooing, hens were clucking, sheep were baa-ing; bugles sounded in the distance from the Turkish barracks; while from an unseen smithy near at hand came the musical clink of a hammer on iron. People sitting up on mules and donkeys between paniers filled with garden-produce, women in flowing draperies with laden trays or pitchers on their heads and children clinging to their skirts, advanced continually, their footfalls noiseless on the dusty road. Vendors of all sorts of foodstuff raised their cries.

Jemîleh, pupil and in some sort servant of the English missionary ladies, knelt at a window some eight feet above the road, with elbows planted on the sill and chin imprisoned in the cup of her joined

hands. She was waiting for her father to pass by, as was his custom on that morning of the week, and in the meanwhile strained her ears to catch each accent of the crowd, showing her white teeth in appreciation of its humours. A comely black-browed maid of eighteen summers, she could look as meek as mice upon occasion; but now her glance was bold even to impudence.

A turbaned man of woe-begone appearance called: "A good thing! A good thing!" in plaintive tones, alluding to the slabs of bread with which his tray was piled. Another breadseller behind him cried with glee: "A better thing! With me, my masters! Praise to Allah!" This latter, happening to catch sight of Jemîleh at her window, grinned up at her and pointed to his victim.

"I pursue that dotard like his shadow," he proclaimed, "and yet he has not wit enough to change his cry. . . A better thing!" he yelled again, exultant, as the other once more raised his lamentable note.

"O Ibrahîm, the Friend of God, who milked the White One! O mouth and gums! O cool delight! O lemons!" Cries succeeded. A lengthy string of camels passed with jangling bells, led by a hooded Bedawi upon a donkey. The long barrel of an antique gun projected from behind the tribesman's shoulder. Two Turkish soldiers, barefoot, out at elbows, under high red fezzes, sauntered by, singing and holding one another's hand.

"O Mûsa, Striker of the Rock! O fount of Mercy!" At length she heard a well-known voice upraised. Her father, it appeared, was selling water-melons. Leaning forward to attract his notice, she saw him telegraphing his delight at spying her. He rode his donkey underneath the window.

"I have great news, O my father, praise to Allah!" she exclaimed. "The sister's daughter of my ladies has arrived from the land of the English. She is young and fair. She loves me very much."

The old fellâh grimaced and gave his shoulders a slight shrug. He pushed up his black turban and once-red tarbûsh, made one by ancient ties of dust and sweat, to scratch his head the more conveniently as he made answer: "Thou art blest, perhaps. I know her not. Is that thy news?"

"There is much more. Have patience, O my father! Last night she said that it was in her mind to remain in our country, and take me to live with her. Her parents both are dead and she is rich and free."

"A blessing on thy lips!" cried the fellâh with more enthusiasm. "The village will receive her as a queen. There is the new house which the sheykh has built for letting. I will speak for it. She needs a groom, there is thy brother Fâris; a steward—here am I at her disposal. But"—here he frowned and scratched his head again, cursing his donkey's ancestry, which made it restless—"what can she do among us? We have no amusements for a Frankish

lady. Build not on her decision, she will surely change it."

"Listen!" rejoined Jemîleh, with a mocking laugh. "Young as she is, and beautiful, she wishes to convert the people, as a missionary. She loves me very much, the praise to Allah!"

"Ho, ho!" laughed Abu Fâris, leaning back upon his donkey. "If she desires a convert, here am I! Let her but feed me, clothe me, pay me monthly wages, and—God forgive me—I would trample on a holy image."

"Hush, O my father. Speak not such impiety," his daughter up above rebuked him, smiling.

"Well, in sh'Allah, she will come to us at Deyr Amûn in order that the neighbours may behold thy greatness. Antun the priest still frowns on me for letting thee be brought up as a Brûtestânt. He threatens me with Hell hereafter. But I put it to him thus: 'Suppose,' I say, 'a blessed fool appeared before thee suddenly, and offered for a child of thine, rank, fortune and the noblest education all for nothing, wouldst thou reject the offer, O our father Antun, simply because the mad one was a Brûtestânt?' He swears he would reject it. I know better. . . . Allah! the breeze is hot already; I grow thirsty. Have you any water?"

"Go to the door and knock," replied Jemîleh. "Abbâs will give thee water and some food. Afîfeh is not yet astir. She will not catch us." The girl then left the window and her bedroom, and stole

on tiptoe through the sleeping house. Her father was already in the courtyard when she reached it. After the dusty crowded road the clean-swept white quadrangle seemed a lake of coolness; the shrubs which grew in boxes in the centre made it like a garden. The fellâh sank down with a sigh upon the bottom step of a stone flight conducting to the upper chambers by an open gallery. Jemîleh, darting down those stairs, squatted beside him and embraced his arm. Abbâs the negro, smiling, brought a jar of water and a tray of food, then sat down on his heels against the sunlit wall, taking the donkey's headrope in his hands.

"Hast heard our news, O Abu Fâris?" he inquired.

"Aye, praise to Allah. Jemîleh has been telling me."

"Hush!" hissed Jemîleh. "He knows naught of that. It is about the Pasha that he means."

"About the Pasha I know nothing verily. What is the news of which thou speakest, O my soul?"

"The Wâli comes to this our house to-day."

The negro's grin was widened by two inches. Again Jemîleh whispered in her father's ear: "It is a folly of the ladies. They invited the old Muslim devil to our prize-giving."

"Hush!" breathed the father, with an anxious eye upon Abbâs, to whom he answered with extreme politeness—

"Ma sh'Allah! It is an honour. Naturally thou art pleased, O sheykh."

"Naturally, I am pleased," replied the negro, "yet hardly in the way thou thinkest, O my eyes. I know well that His Excellency is God's creature just as I am, neither more nor less. I am glad that he is coming for the reason that he is a Muslim. In all the twenty years that I have kept the doorway of this house no Muslim better educated than myself has passed the threshold; so that I fear the ladies may have come to think that all the Muslimîn on earth are poor, despised, illiterate like me. But now the Wâli comes—a mighty potentate. His visit will assure them it is otherwise."

"May his visit bring all good!" said Abu Fâris amiably, as, having drunk his fill, he rose to go. He added, for Jemîleh's ear alone: "Curse his religion!"

Therewith he took the headrope from the negro's hand, embraced his daughter fondly, and with sighs led forth his donkey from that cool retreat.

Jemîleh, flying back to her own room, was intercepted by the Sitt Afifeh, not yet dressed. The Sitt Afifeh was the right hand of the Misses Berenger, their mouthpiece in transactions with the people of the country. She ruled the native household with a rod of iron. Jemîleh, to divert her scolding, cried at sight of her, "Abbâs is praising God because the Pasha comes."

"May his house be destroyed!" rejoined the Sitt Afifeh promptly. "It is enough to make one die

of shame before the missionaries. The ladies were possessed with devils to invite the dog."

In religious indignation she forgot her purpose to upbraid Jemîleh. The latter hurriedly performed her morning tasks, then ran upstairs and rapped upon a bedroom door, first softly, then a little louder, till she heard: "Come in!"

The English girl, whom she had thought to find asleep, was up and dressed already, kneeling at the open window to observe the crowd just as Jemîleh had been doing two hours earlier. As she looked round upon Jemîleh's entrance, the light entangled in her hair was like a halo. The dark girl could have knelt and worshipped that fair vision in which were all her hopes of high preferment.

"I came to see if I could serf you in your dressing. But now I see you are already dressed. I luf you, and I wish to serf you always," said Jemîleh softly.

"Dear Jemîleh," came the answer. "Stay here a minute and explain things to me. It is all so new." The fair girl took the dark girl's hand and stroked it lovingly. Jemîleh's heart beat loud with pride as she knelt down beside her.

"What is that man selling? You see the man I mean, with the green turban."

"He is a Muslim holy man. He's selling charms. Those beeble fery suberstitious, wicked beeble."

"What is that man with all the weapons stuck about him, standing talking with those others near the mosque?"

"That is another Muslim from the mountains. They too are fery wicked beeble, fery safage. If anybody sbeak to him a little sharb he kill them same as you or me would kill a dog."

"I don't kill dogs, do you?" rejoined the lady. They both laughed. "Oh, how I wish that I could understand what they are saying! Jemîleh, you must teach me Arabic at once. What did that man there tell the other who is laughing? Say it first in English, then in Arabic, so that I can get one phrase by heart."

"He ask God to be so good as to burn that other fellow's father."

"Oh dear! I won't learn that!"

"It's all like that, the talk they make out there. They're Muslims mostly—fery wicked, not like English beeble. In the fillage where I come from, all are Christians, trully, though ignorant and suberstitious. But here the beeble mostly Muslims—dreadful beeble! I wish that they could all be killed. I hate them!"

"You must not talk like that," replied the fair girl, horrified. "They cannot be all bad. It is simply that they have not known the truth. We must not hate them, dear Jemîleh; we must love them and do all that in us lies to turn their hearts and lead them to the truth." The fair girl's tone had changed completely in a trice. Instead of the frank speech of comradeship, she now used words as if each one had been a holy charm, with earnest hesitations and

a heightened colour. Here was a weakness to be humoured and caressed.

"All what you say is fery true, Miss Elsie, and you sbeak it like an angel. I do not really hate these beeble as I said," murmured Jemîleh humbly, when the lecture was quite finished. "I'm fery sorry for the boor uneducated Muslims, and I wish to teach them. But the great ones who obbress the Christians, they are bad. That's why we are so sorry that the ladies ask the Wâli to our barty. They think him such a nice old gentleman. He's fery wicked really. He had Christians—thousands of them—massacred—not here, but in Armenia, where he was before. My father and my mother, they could tell you things—true things of what some Muslims have been doing—which would make you cry. Only the day before yesterday some Muslims massacre the Italians which were working on the new tramways, and the Wâli, when they tell him, he just laugh. It's dreadful that he's coming here into a Christian house."

"It does seem rather much," agreed the fair girl warmly. "My aunts can't know his character. Some one should tell them."

"Don't tell, I beg. They'll think I'm makin' mischief. Berhaps he's not so bad as beeble say. I always think that we ought to be more batient with the Muslims than with the Christians what have always known what's right. Oh, dear Miss Elsie, there is nothing I should luf like labourin' along

with you to make them good and gentle—make them earnest Christians!”

The dark girl kept a watch on her companion's face. She feared for half a minute she had overdone it. But Elsie stroked her hand approvingly, and murmured: “Dear Jemîleh!” All was well.

II

MORE than thirty years before the day on which this story opens, three independent English damsels, Jane, Gertrude and Sophia Berenger, had set out from the neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells to visit Palestine. Their pilgrimage accomplished, they had chosen to extend their Eastern tour to Antioch and Asia Minor. In pursuance of this resolution, they had travelled for some days on horseback through romantic scenery, sleeping in tents and eating curious food, when Gertrude, who had been the moving spirit of the expedition, fell ill of typhoid fever in a lonely place. There was no doctor, nor any possibility of obtaining all those comforts which in illness Europeans deem necessities. Her sisters did their best to nurse her promptly, assisted by the native servants of their camp—all of them men, which was at first embarrassing. But those men, though wild-looking and adherents of a false religion, showed untiring kindness and such delicacy that the ladies Jane and Sophia ever after felt indebted to the people of the country. Gertrude, in delirium, was carried gently by the men themselves. Moved thus by easy stages, she survived until they reached a city, where the Eng-

lish consul and his wife, good Christian people, received her in their home to die.

After her death Jane and Sophia could not endure the thought of a return to England. "To be near her," as they put it, they remained in the strange city, opening a school for girls as her memorial.

These ladies knew no Arabic beyond "Good-day," nor had they recognized the need to learn that language. All instruction in their school was thus administered in English; and the kind of education there obtainable, being the same which the Misses Berenger had received at the hands of an old-fashioned governess at home in England, was not exactly suited to the daughters of a wilder country. But the atmosphere of gentle goodness, the sweet manners and high moral tone of the establishment, gained it renown. Soon, in addition to the twelve poor children—originally intended to be orphans—whom they entertained in memory of their departed sister, the ladies were entreated to take paying pupils, daughters of the wealthy native Christians whose rage for European manners overcame their dread of heresy.

For thirty years the ladies led a still, secluded life, as English as it could be made in that far country, devoted to the welfare of their pupils and their native servants. Two or three times in the year they drove out in a hired carriage to pay calls upon the Protestant community, Abbâs upon the box be-

side the driver, with strict orders (given to him through the Sitt Afîfeh) on no account to let that driver whip the horses. And twice a year, on the occasion of their prize-giving, they entertained the British colony to prayers and tea.

One day on which they thus drove out to pay their calls, it happened that they met the Wâli driving in full state with troops and outriders, and when he looked at them had thought it right to bow. "He is, after all, the ruler of the land we live in," said Miss Jane. Their bows had been returned with courtesy, and they had carried with them the remembrance of a very pleasant smile illuminating an old man's face, which in repose had touched them by its patient, sad expression. In their calm life this chance encounter made a notable event. Vague tales had reached them of the Wâli's wickedness; they had heard him named with horror in the talk of missionaries as one whose hands were red with Christian blood. He had at least a human soul, they thought.

"We ought to be more thankful than we often are to God that we were granted to be born in England, in a Christian home. We should not be too ready to blame other people for faults arising from the lack of these advantages," Miss Jane observed. "Who knows what sort of education Hasan Pasha had in earlier years! He may have never met with gentle influences. In that case, all they tell of him

would be in part excusable, though I, for one, do not believe a half of it."

These English missionary ladies felt thenceforward towards Hasan Pasha, an aged Turk accused of bloody massacre, as towards a brother who had erred through ignorance. They longed to show him sympathy and, with that end in view, decided to invite him to their prize-giving. His answer to the invitation, couched in courtly French, delighted them; and when the other missionaries blamed the step which they had taken and harped upon the Wâli's wickedness, Miss Jane was moved to make the only harsh remark that any one remembered to have heard from her—

"He is at least a gentleman. It is quite a treat to meet one, really, after all these years."

Argument was useless both with her and Miss Sophia. The pair had always until now appeared compact of mildness. Now they had suddenly become great ladies addressing persons of inferior breeding. Their friends retired discomfited, with angry murmurs.

Things were at this pass, the two Misses Berenger ignoring the objections of the Protestant community, when the coming of their niece from England made diversion.

Upon the little English colony the appearance of Miss Elsie Wilding made a great impression, favourable in the main. She was fresh from home, fashionably dressed, and evidently well endowed with

this world's goods, yet with it all quite unaffected and an earnest Christian. The missionaries buzzed around her amiably, and the two young men of the society—a sandy-haired Scotch doctor and a Welsh dispenser—were at once enslaved. Her aunts were glad, although she brought with her a breeze of independence and rash counsels which disturbed the house. She came from the same neighbourhood where they had spent their youth; had been bred in the same Evangelical school of thought, had been confirmed in the same church, mentioned familiar names at every turn of conversation. It was delightful to them thus to breathe again the atmosphere of bygone days; but it was sad too, since it made them realize how completely they had fallen out of touch with English life. They in their far retreat were left unchanged, and even unaware that change was going on—"like fossils that we are," as Miss Jane phrased it.

Observant of their niece's conduct and demeanour, they saw how great the change had been since they were girls. Elsie habitually used expressions which in their young days had been esteemed mere vulgar slang. She showed but scant respect for age, and none for sex, trenching upon men's province in a thousand ways. Young as she was and inexperienced, she would have argued on religion with a clergyman. She had her own opinion upon everything, and proclaimed it in a way which was at times annoying. Though it was clear, from what she told

them of her life at home, that she had made no special study of the mission field, she told her aunts exactly where they failed and what it was exactly that they ought to do; surveying all life's business from the general's standpoint which her aunts, of humbler mind, had never dreamt of taking. It had not been thought the thing for women in their day. Yet with all this she was a charming creature, good to look upon, affectionate and full of zeal for what was right. The two old maids were fascinated by her brilliance. Sophia by the second day was quite enthralled, while Jane, more conscious of the spell, was on her mettle to resist it till such time as reason should endorse a full approval.

"We must go about a little more now she is here," observed Miss Sophy. "Our friends will ask her, and she herself will wish to see the sights."

"Yes," said the elder's sister with a frown. "It is upsetting."

"We shall enjoy it, I expect," replied Miss Sophy. "It is so different going with a fresh young creature to going by ourselves."

Elsie was horrified at their secluded life.

"It can't be healthy," she informed them on the morning of the prize-giving. "And how can you endure it? In the midst of such excitements! Jemîleh tells me there was fighting only yesterday over the new tramlines. The Mahometans were killing Christian workmen. I should have been there

and tried to stop it. I should have gone and told the Pasha what I thought of him."

"My dear, we are not rulers of this country," said Miss Jane, with dry amusement.

"I know, but there is such a lot that one could do! Don't be angry with me, aunt, I do so want to see the best. The missionaries here seem to have given up in despair. They aren't attacking unbelief. Why, here are you, two Christian missionaries, employing a Mahometan—a man who would kill you if his people gave the order."

"My dear, how you exaggerate! If what you say were true, I would sooner be killed by Abbâs, who is our friend, than by some stranger."

"Well, have you ever made the slightest effort to convert Abbâs?"

"No," said Miss Jane, with a slight rise of colour. "In that I will admit we may be wrong. Abbâs is a good man. His simple trust in God would put the faith of many Christians to the blush. He is not clever enough to understand the subtleties of doctrine. We felt unworthy"—here Miss Jane assumed a haughty mien—"unworthy to approach him upon such a subject. Do not believe all that you hear from Christians of the country. They are very narrow. We have met with truly Christian kindness from Mahometans."

"At the time of your Aunt Gertrude's illness, when we were quite alone," supplied Miss Sophy for the niece's full enlightenment.

"Oh, aunts, forgive me!" cried the girl impulsively. "But how about original sin? And surely you would wish all the more to save them from it, if you feel like that about them. I could not rest until I had them safe. I do see that you are perfect dears and saints and angels, ever so much better than I shall ever be. But is it right, as Christians, pledged to witness to the truth? You have got this Pasha coming here to-day. Won't you say a word to him about his persecution of the Christians?"

"Certainly not, my love."

"Surely you cannot receive such a man—a notorious persecutor—in your house without a word of protest?"

"Again, my dear, I think that you exaggerate, or have perhaps been misinformed by some one. As a matter of fact, we do intend to do something—something a little bold, perhaps, but which we trust will not offend him. Remember, he is the governor of the land in which we have lived peacefully for thirty years. We have procured from the S.P.C.K. a copy of the Holy Scriptures in the Turkish language. This we shall present to His Excellency, for a memento of his visit."

Their simple goodness was too much for Elsie. Further argument had been irreverence. But while she went about the house that morning, deftly arranging flowers and foliage from the courtyard in pots and vases in the little chapel, and in the room

made ready for the prize-giving, moving in deep shadow with the consciousness of blazing sunlight out of doors, she could not think with them. She had her vision of the kind of work that should be done by missionaries, out in the sunlight, fighting hand to hand with evil, not shut up in a cool and comfortable home aloof from strife.

III

Two cawwâses of the British Consulate, resplendent in their uniform of sky-blue silken cloth all silver braided, with monstrous swords and huge dependent tassels to their skull-cap fezzes, standing outside the gateway of the house, informed the passer-by that some festivity was taking place there. At going in, the first thing which assailed the eye was the red Turkish flag with white crescent and star hanging from a cord which had been stretched across the little court, beside it a much smaller Union Jack. Abbâs had borrowed the large flag upon his own account, deeming it necessary for a fit reception of the Sultan's viceroy. The missionaries shuddered as they passed beneath it.

The company which gathered in a small room off the court—the school-room, being decorated for the prize-giving, was reserved for a surprise effect—conversed in apprehensive fashion until four o'clock, when Abbâs ran across the court to say: "His Highness comes!" On that announcement the English Consul led Miss Berenger to the door of the room, bidding her wait there while he himself went out to meet the Governor. Elsie Wilding placed herself where she could see across the courtyard to the

gateway. She caught a glimpse of soldiers in the street and heard the jangle of accoutrements, the prance of horses. The two cawwâses strode into the court with dignified slow march. They ranged themselves on either side of the inner archway and saluted, while a white-bearded man, immaculately clad in European fashion, passed between them and was welcomed by the Consul. Elsie was disappointed. She had expected something picturesque and barbarous, more evidently wicked than this neat old gentleman, who, but for his fez, might easily have been mistaken for a French diplomatist.

At tidings of the Governor's approach one or two native Christians who were in the room hurriedly resumed the headdress which they had discarded among Europeans. They stood at attention with an air of reverence. The Consul, at Miss Jane's request, performed the necessary introductions; and when it came to Elsie's turn she was annoyed to find herself no whit less awkward than her predecessors in the ceremony.

The Pasha's dignified kind looks attracted, while his evil reputation much repelled her. Saluting in the graceful Eastern manner, he talked to her in French, inquiring how she liked the country; and she replied at random, thinking about his persecution of the Christians.

Her aunt Jane interrupted, saying shyly, "Excellency, we are going to the chapel where the girls are all assembled. Is it your pleasure to accom-

pany us or would you prefer to await our return and take refreshment?"

"I come with you, mademoiselle, and with the greatest pleasure," was the answer. "Pass in front, I beg of you, with all these ladies. I follow with our friend the Consul and the other gentlemen."

From where she sat in the large vaulted room which served as chapel Elsie watched the Wâli's face throughout the service. It was attentive and devout beneath the scarlet fez. He did what he saw others doing and appeared to like the hymns.

During the short address delivered by a Scottish minister he leaned towards the Consul to obtain the gist of what was said, and once or twice he gave a nod of grave approval. There came another hymn, a final prayer and then the visitors departed to the reception-room; whither they were followed shortly by the children shepherded by the Sitt Afifeh and Jemîleh. The pupils took their places upon three rows of forms. Elsie, sitting with the grown-ups near a table at the other end of the big room, heard Hasan Pasha saying to her aunts—

"I have been deeply interested. It was so simple, so touching. In your service it is like with us; there are no idols; prayer goes straight to God. I remember being told as a child that the English were good Mussulmans without knowing it. That is an overstatement, doubtless; but the fact remains that you are near to us in this and other things." She did not catch Miss Jane's reply, for the Con-

sul began talking to her in a flippant strain. There was a buzz of general conversation, then a call of "Hush!"

Miss Jane stood up and made a hesitating, not ungraceful little speech, referring to the honour of the Wâli's presence. Before asking him to give the prizes, which were heaped before her on the table, she put a few show questions to the pupils. Miss Sophy followed with some questions on the English language, her especial province. The answers won applause. Elsie's cheeks burned. She was sure that the Wâli with his calm grey eyes saw clearly the futility of this performance. Of what use could it be to Eastern girls to spell correctly words like "apophthegm" and "hyperbole," or to know the names of English counties and their capitals? What was the Christian value of such knowledge? The Wâli would despise all Christian missionaries and tolerate their efforts as quite harmless. Elsie wanted to impress him with the fire and spirit, and also with the intellectual power of Christianity. Uneasy on her straight-backed chair, she watched him closely. It was the first time in her life that she had met a man who, while at all points what is called a gentleman, was not a Christian. His demeanour shattered all her preconceived ideas about the influence of faith upon behaviour.

The prizes were all given. There ensued a pause; and then she heard her Aunt Jane saying—

"Children, his Excellency has graciously expressed his wish to speak to you."

The Wâli then stood up and spoke in French, Miss Sophy acting as interpreter, until it came to praises of herself, when she retired in favour of the British Consul. He said that he was a great advocate of instruction for girls, and prayed God for a day to come when every girl-child in the Empire would enjoy such opportunities of learning as were given to those present by the kindness of two noble English ladies. But there was something which was more than mere instruction; he referred to education, the formation of a solid character, by which a man or woman was secured in after-life against temptations which mere learning could not help them to withstand. It was this which he found admirable in the English system: that booklore was subordinated to the inculcation of good principles. He concluded his remarks with a personal compliment to the Misses Berenger, whom he thanked in the name of the Imperial government for their civilizing work.

"Copy these excellent ladies, my dear children, and please God you will become like them, a blessing to the world."

The assembly then unbent. The children filed out to their tea. Refreshments were brought in and handed round. The Wâli came to Elsie with a bow. "Dear mademoiselle," he said, "I have a daughter of about your age and something like you in appear-

ance. Will you honour me by paying her a visit? She speaks English well, and she is lonely in this city so far from Constantinople, where her friends all dwell."

"With pleasure," she replied, and he passed on. Miss Jane went round with him, translating his polite remarks to everybody. It irritated the young girl to note the awkward bearing of the missionaries, their forced smiles when under the old gentleman's immediate notice, and the puzzled scowl with which they honoured his retreating form. None of them, men or women, seemed to know whether to rise or remain seated when he spoke to them.

The Consul came and murmured in her ear: "Miss Wilding, what do you think the Pasha has been saying? That the most abominable waste of good material that he has seen in all his life is two such charming ladies as your aunts old maids. I hope he won't tell them so to their faces. He is capable."

Elsie gave a laugh of politeness. She resented very bitterly the Pasha's triumph, the way in which he (the Mahometan) shone out amid this gathering of earnest Christians. Then she saw that he was on the point of going. He came straight to her. "It is agreed, is it not, mademoiselle? You will come to see my daughter. She will be enchanted." He passed on to the door, where her aunts waited. Miss Jane had a small parcel in her hand.

"Excellency," she exclaimed, with nervous emphasis, "I ask you to accept this souvenir of your kind visit. It is our holy book, the Bible, in the Turkish language."

Elsie sprang erect and her eyes brightened. At last the proper note was struck of Christian warfare. The missionary crowd were staring awe-struck, as if they thought the old man would fall dead, or be consumed by fire. He took the gift with reverence and actually kissed the hand that gave it.

"You overwhelm me, my dear mademoiselle, with all your goodness. The book is holy for us also. I shall always keep it."

He was gone. The two cawwâses opened the great door. A bugle sounded in the street without, and there was once more heard the prance of horses as the carriage and its escort whirled away.

Then tongues were loosed among the crowd as people settled down to make a comfortable vulgar tea, relieved of the disturbing presence of the unbeliever.

"The old wolf!" said a malignant voice in Elsie's ear. "With all that blood of Christians on his hands to dare to come into this house and talk as he did. The old hypocrite! I hated anything so wicked to come near me."

The speaker was a Scottish missionary's wife, a red-faced woman with cold eyes and teeth like tusks. Elsie had met her several times before, but had not seen how horrible she was until this minute.

IV

ON the afternoon of the next day, as Elsie was sitting in her bedroom with Jemîleh, Abbâs, all smiles, came up to say that Hasan Pasha's carriage was in waiting, at the same time handing her a note, which she tore open irritably. It was in English, written in a childish hand and signed "Emineh." It entreated her to have compassion on a lonely exile who already loved her. She judged that there was nothing for it but to go. Jemîleh, helping her to dress, was almost tearful. She was already jealous of the Wâli's daughter, hearing that the latter could speak English and had been well educated. Having never in her life approached a Muslim lady, she could form no mental image of her rival, except that she was proud and bred in luxury.

"The ladies didn't ought to let you go," she moaned. "They're fery wicked, all those Muslim girls. They're taught to do bad things from time they're four or fife years old. They're taught to curse the Christians and to hate them. I've heard my mother tell how Muslim women haf stolen Christian children and made them curse the Lord Jesus; then they laugh. They catch the Christian men sometimes and kill them fery cruel in the harems.

They're worse than what the men are—more fanatical."

"I don't believe all that, you know!" said Elsie, laughing.

"You don't know, Miss Elsie! This lady, she'll be fery sweet to you. You'll think she lufs you fery much. And all the while she's wishin' for to kill you. She is bad, bad, bad!"

With that word ringing in her ears, Miss Wilding went out to the Wâli's carriage. A fezzed, frockcoated servant shut her in and then sprang up on to the box beside the driver.

She was driven through the city at great speed, amid much frightened shouting from the crowd of wayfarers. At length the din was left behind, the wheels rolled noiseless on a sandy road. The carriage turned in at a gateway in a hedge of prickly pear, passed up a fairly well-kept drive beneath acacia trees, and drew up to the steps of a large country-house. The servant jumped down from the box and helped her to alight. Another, who had been sitting on a chair beneath the portico, rose and came to meet her slowly, being very fat. Both kept smiling and saluting every time they met her gaze. They ushered her into a cool and spacious hall, where the Wâli himself welcomed her, exclaiming—

"It is good of you to come! My daughter is a tyrant. She commanded me to send the carriage and her note to you at once, although I warned her that it might be putting you to inconvenience.

Do you desire to rest a little after the drive? . . . No? Then I will take you to my daughter. She is in the garden."

He led her to a door in a great screen of lattice-work, which a black servant opened to them with the smile and the salute which all these people gave so readily, and through it to a second hall more comfortably furnished; down a passage, through another door and out on to a rather weedy terrace, with a fine stone balustrade disfigured by a row of kerosene tins in which plants were growing. A ragged gardener squatting on the ground was examining one of the plants, which he had taken down, minutely, as if the work required a microscope. He looked as if he had been doing the same work for hours, and would have gone on doing it till night but for the appearance of his master; at sight of whom he sprang up and saluted with the usual smile. Hasan Pasha opened a white sun-shade and held it over Elsie's head. They went down steps into a patch of tended garden, beyond which spread a wild one—much more lovely—a tangle of pink roses leading to a grove of walnut trees. A noise of running water grew as they advanced. Beneath the walnut trees, on the brink of a wide stream as restless as a mountain torrent, stood a small kiosk of stone built like a Greek temple, open between the columns on three sides. From this emerged a figure draped in white from head to foot. "There is my daughter. I now leave you, if you will permit it, mademoiselle.

"I have so much to do." The Pasha then turned back towards the house.

Elsie continued to advance, feeling ungainly and constrained in her tight-fitting clothes in presence of the girl in flowing draperies. The girl's eyes were intent upon her face. They were blue eyes and their colour was enhanced by kohl. Her cheeks, too, had a touch of rouge, as Elsie saw with horror. But she had no time to formulate her disapproval before Emineh Khânum flung her arms around her neck and kissed her. Elsie was enveloped in a sweet peculiar perfume which, though repugnant, like the rouge and kohl, to her English feelings, had a strange attraction. The fervour of the greeting took her breath away. The Turkish girl then grasped her hand and led her to the pleasure-house. Three other maidens were there waiting to be introduced. They were clothed exactly like Emineh Khânum and appeared her equals. Elsie was shocked to hear that they were slaves.

"I am so happy," sighed the hostess, when they were all seated upon piles of cushions, on which Elsie sat unbending but the rest reclined. The hubbub of first greeting had subsided. One of the slave-girls was preparing coffee on a brazier, while a tray of sweets and salted nuts was set upon the floor in reach of everybody's stretched-out hand. "At home I have so many friends, here none except these girls of our own house. When my father spoke of you,

at once I loved you. Do you know that you are even sweeter than I had expected?"

Again she flung her arms round Elsie's neck, much to the visitor's embarrassment. One of the slaves, a handsome creature, who remained aloof, appeared to Elsie's nervous apprehension to be sneering. This girl, upon a word in Turkish from her mistress, who might have been her sister from the tone employed, picked up a lute which lay beside her on the ground, and after strumming on it for a time, began to wail forth a strange song. To Elsie's ear it was discordant and yet fascinating, a part of the uncanny charm these girls exhaled. The reflection that for the first time in her life she was alone with unregenerate mortals caused a sinking of the heart.

"Perhaps you do not love that music?" said Emineh, watchful of her face, when the song ceased. "I do so wish you to be happy with us. If there is anything that you would wish, please tell me. We are all your servants. Perhaps you wish to go into the house? I sit out here because it is so cool, and the river talks so sweetly and I love the roses. We Turks are glad of things like that. But Europeans call it wasting time. Do you love reading books? Ah, so do I! Will you please tell me names of English books—not those which are of drinking tea and Christian meetings, but books of thoughtfulness and life. Of course you have read Gibbon's History? I like it much; it is so true and just. You have not read it? That surprises me. My

father has a French translation which is very good, but certainly it must be better in the English. You are not fanatical, are you? No; you are too well-educated and enlightened!"

"I am a Christian," returned Elsie bravely, with a nervous smile.

"Of course; and so am I a Mahometan. But we do not hate and wish to kill each other like the ignorant poor people. The Christians in our country are fanatical, except a very few who have been better educated. My very greatest friend is an Orthodox Greek girl. She used to share the lessons of my English governess. And her father was my father's friend. He was a great philosopher."

"I am afraid I don't know much about the question," Elsie answered, "but I think the native Christians have some cause to be fanatical, they have been oppressed so long by the Mahometans."

"Oh, but that is such a great mistake!" cried out Emineh eagerly. "They have always had protection, have always been permitted to perform their own religion. They were not oppressed any more than were the poor Mahometans till they began to wish to ruin the whole country. They would kill us all if they could have their wish, and, what is worse, would persecute Islam. Ask my father: he will tell you all about it. He has been much blamed for his severity towards some Christians. He has been shot at many times. His friends, his servants have been killed. But he is not fanatical. He is just and wise.

But let us not talk more of politics. I love you, and I wish you also to love me, to be my friend for always, will you?"

Elsie acquiesced politely, though in conscience she perceived no path of friendship which she and a Mahometan could tread together till life's end. Emineh, whose eyes never left her face, noticing the shade of sadness, asked—

"Are you fatigued? Say! Would you wish to rest? I will take you to a bedroom if you wish. Or would you like that girl to sing again? I wish to do exactly as you like."

The afternoon wore on with song and conversation. It grew cooler. The sunlight had acquired a rosy tinge; the shadows lengthened, turning indigo. A slave-girl, not the singer, told a story of two lovers, which Emineh rendered into halting English. It was full of bloodshed and unbridled lust. Coffee and another tray full of refreshments came. Soon after, as the sun was setting, Elsie rose to go.

"Oh, but you must not! Oh, no, no! Please don't!" exclaimed Emineh, looking ready to cry. "I cannot let you go away so soon. I thought that you would stay with me for several days. At least one night!"

The slave-girls too expressed amazement at her talk of going.

"But you will come again? Swear by Almighty God that you will come again!"

"I certainly shall hope to do so," replied Elsie shyly.

"Swear it!"

"I do not swear," said Elsie, "but I promise."

"Is it not the same thing, then, in English? You are funny!"

The girls walked up towards the house with Elsie, Emineh keeping hold of her right hand. To pass the time until the carriage should be ready, the hostess showed the visitor her English books. In the midst of the display the Pasha joined them.

"Well, mademoiselle, I hope you are not tired to death by our dull ways?"

"On the contrary," said Elsie, "I have spent a very interesting afternoon. Mademoiselle your daughter has been charming to me."

"And yet she goes away!" exclaimed Emineh in good French. She clung, complaining, to her father as a spoilt child might. "I expected her to stay with me at least two days. I fear she is a little bit fanatical. She thinks the Christians are oppressed continually," Emineh pouted, looking round at Elsie.

"We hear of massacres," observed the latter, trembling a little at her own effrontery.

"That is true," replied the Pasha gently. "It is sad, and must seem horrible to those who dwell at peace, like you in England. If we thought like you we should go mad, for all our lives the sword is drawn against us; all the peace that we enjoy is in

the intervals of bloody war which knows no quarter. We try to mete out justice, but it is not understood. Revenge is the one cry of all the tribes and factions. We love our land and our religion, and when either is assailed we kill. If I knew that my own daughter were a traitor—which God forbid—I would kill her with my own hand.”

“And I would kill my father and myself if such dishonour were to come upon our house through him!” exclaimed Emineh proudly, taking her father’s hand and kissing it. “It is not like in England. We do not pass our lives in tea and tennis. We are attacked on all sides. We all know that to-morrow we may die most horribly.”

“There is truth in what my daughter says—too vehemently, as she utters all things,” said the Pasha, smiling. “The massacres have never been on one side only. Try to think kindly of us, mademoiselle. We are a tragic people.”

The carriage was announced as ready. He led Elsie out. A manservant, standing by the carriage door, was holding a bouquet of roses, made up tightly like a cauliflower. This the Pasha took from him and gave to Elsie through the carriage window.

She was thankful to escape from that unChristian atmosphere.

V

JEMÎLEH was no schemer. She saw a radiant vision of the future and ran towards it with a child's directness, becoming cunning only when she met an obstacle. Her first perception of the beauty of a life as Elsie's mentor had been bright enough to make her think it half fulfilled. But afterwards, as days and weeks went by, she lost sight altogether of the end itself in thought of the first step towards its attainment; which was to give her loved one the desire for village life. Miss Wilding was quite happy in the city. The missionaries asked her out to tea and tennis, and got up various picnics to amuse her. Jemîleh waited for a change of mood, contented with her post of humble confidant. She explained to Elsie things which puzzled her, told her stories of the country, taught her words of Arabic, trying to make her service indispensable.

The change for which she waited came by slow degrees, betrayed in frequent yawns, a certain listlessness, and some reflexions on the dulness of the small society. Jemîleh's heart beat faster, but she said no word. At length one afternoon, when every one was resting, she was in Elsie's room, as often happened, paying court to her, when all at once the fair girl heaved a mighty sigh—

"I feel so lazy and so useless, so imprisoned. What I want is to be doing something. All this country is so fascinating, and there is so much to do; yet the missionaries lead the kind of lives which they would lead at home. I should like to go about among the people, to learn to know their minds and really help them. Why, I've only used my saddle twice since I've been here! I thought I should get lots of riding."

Jemileh paused a moment as in deep reflection, then made answer softly—

"It's fery easy to do all you wish, dear miss. You're rich, and free to go the way you like. You take me with you, I'll make all things smooth. What you want is a nice house, your own, in some nice Christian fillage. In my own fillage I could find a good one. You make that your home. Then, besides, you haf two tents, you go about the country when you blease. You haf your horses and your serfants."

"I don't think I should choose a Christian village. I want to work among Mahometans," said Elsie dreamily.

"You can't lif in a Muslim fillage, dear Miss Elsie. God knows I think like you do. I wish to helb and succour those boor wicked beebles. If you lif in my fillage you haf friends around you, who helb you and adfise in what you do. The Muslim fillage is a half-hour distant, riding. You go there and confert the beebles when you wish. I hobe you'll

go and see the place some day. My father and my mother—all the fillage—would be very glad.”

“I will,” said Elsie in a tone of interest. “I did not know there were Mahometans so near. But what I really do want is a horse to ride.”

“That’s very easy,” said Jemîleh, laughing happily; “you leave all that to me. I have a relation of my own who knows of all the horses. I’ll tell him to come over here and see you. He’ll soon find you one, and he’ll look after it. He’ll live at the khan with the horse.”

“That’s not a bad idea. I’ll think it over,” murmured Elsie.

The dark girl took that answer as a full consent. Enraptured with her progress, upon leaving Elsie she hurried to Abbâs the doorkeeper, and arranged with him for a message to be sent at once by one of the returning market-people to her brother Fâris, adjuring him to come at once to rare good fortune. So urgent and alluring was the message that Fâris himself appeared at nine o’clock that evening, dusty and perspiring, having run most of the distance from his village in the mountains. His arrival was announced to the Misses Berenger as they got up from supper, which meal the Sitt Afîfeh always took with them, Jemîleh and another damsel waiting.

“A man from Deyr Amûn! Why, that is miles away! What can he want at this hour of the night?” exclaimed Miss Jane. “Afîfeh, will you kindly go and question him?”

Jemîleh's cheeks burned and a pulse beat in her brain. The Sitt Afîfeh presently returned and, with a spiteful glance at her, informed the ladies—

“He says Jemîleh ordered him to come.”

Jemîleh, almost weeping in confusion, looked at Elsie. “I think,” she faltered, “it must be the man of whom I spoke—you know, Miss Elsie—for the horse you wish to buy. I did not think he would haf come so quickly. He is my relation.”

“He is her brother,” cried the Sitt Afîfeh in a tone of biting scorn. She, too, had male relations to provide for, and she held that her position in that house made hers the first refusal of its patronage.

“He knows of horses,” faltered poor Jemîleh.

“But Elsie does not want to buy a horse!” exclaimed Miss Jane.

“Oh, yes, I do, aunt,” said the fair girl, and Jemîleh lived again. “I’ll go and see him, if you’ll excuse me for a minute. Jemîleh, come and be interpreter.”

Jemîleh could have fallen on the floor and kissed the loved one’s feet. Together they went out into the court, where Fâris waited—a swarthy, rather sullen-looking youth, ragged and travel-stained. At sight of Elsie’s fairness he sprang up and stood before her, with his eyes and mouth wide open, in a perfect trance of admiration near dismay. Jemîleh was obliged to answer questions for him. Elsie, thinking he looked honest, there and then engaged

him. At Jemîleh's suggestion she gave him a silver piece by way of earnest money, and thereupon went back to join her aunts. Jemîleh stayed behind a moment to embrace her brother, crying: "Now art thou blest indeed!"

"But what am I to do? I know no horse!" he murmured, staring at the money in his open palm.

"Inquire among the dealers! Make them bring their horses hither! Let her choose! Come each day to this house to take her orders. When the horse is bought, thou wilt take care of it, and also of the saddle and the bridle."

"But how does one take care of horses? Allah help me! I never owned a horse in all my life, as well thou knowest!"

"That is easy; I will show thee," said Abbâs the doorkeeper, benevolent spectator of this little scene.

"It is easy, as our uncle says. Fear nothing!" said Jemîleh. "Thou hast now a high position, praise to Allah!"

With that she ran back to the dining-room to clear the table. Her troubles were not over yet by any means. That the two old ladies and the Sitt Afîfeh disapproved of her behaviour she felt sure, and the three together were the greatest power she knew.

After supper every evening, when the ladies went into the drawing-room, Jemîleh was allowed to bring her needlework and sit with them till bed-time. It was then that she expected to be scolded, but to her

surprise there was no mention of her brother's coming. The silence on the subject scared her. She fancied real hostility in the demeanour of the Misses Berenger. And when, after prayers had been said, Miss Jane kept Elsie back, remarking that she wished to speak with her, Jemîleh ran up to her bedroom choked by grief and rage. She knew quite well what the old hag was telling Elsie; how she must distrust the natives of the country, who were sly, intriguing, grasping, incapable of true affection, for ever seeking their own private gain. Jemîleh at that moment hated the Misses Berenger and all the Franks, and all the Protestants, with deadly hatred. Might God consume them! They were destitute of understanding! She cursed the very love she bore to Elsie, esteeming it a great misfortune. She was lying on the floor, face downward, biting the reed mat to prevent her moans from being audible, when there came a soft knock at the door and some one entered.

"Jemîleh, dear! Whatever is the matter?" It was Elsie's voice. Jemîleh's sobs burst forth.

"I luf you!" she exclaimed. "I luf you! And they tell you that I try to cheat you—that I get my brother here for snatching money, that I want you buy a horse to cheat you. They are fery wicked liars. God shall bunish them!"

"For shame, Jemîleh! To speak so of my aunts, who have always been so kind to you. They do not mind your brother coming to be my servant in the

very least. Only they have made me promise that when choosing a horse I shall take the advice of the consul and Doctor Wilson."

"That is it! They think we'd cheat you, 'cause we're natifs! Don't I know the way they think about us? God shall bunish them!"

"Don't talk such wicked nonsense! They said nothing about you."

"I know they try to turn your heart against me," blubbered Jemîleh, partly reassured. "I luf you, and I did so hobe you'd come and lif among us in my fillage, and do good to the boor wicked Muslims like you said, and I be with you always till I die. My brother tells me that there is a new, clean house, all Eurobean furnished, which the sheykh has built. I thought berhabs you'd take that house, and haf me with you as your serfant. I thought to be so habby! Now they stob all that!"

"They haven't stopped anything at all. How could they stop a thing they'd never dreamt of? Now, Jemîleh, no more of this silly crying about nothing! I promise that I'll go and see your village and the house you mention. If the house is at all possible, I'll take it. There now! I'm really tired of doing nothing here."

It took Jemîleh many seconds to graps the blessed meaning of those words. When she did realize her victory she wept anew and, falling down, embraced the fair girl's feet.

VI

Two circumstances unknown to Jemîleh had contributed to put Miss Wilding out of humour with the city and the life she led there. One was a second visit to Emineh Khânum in response to a whole series of absurdly passionate appeals from that young lady. The other was her refusal of an offer of marriage made to her by a member of the little British colony. The two adventures were inseparable in her memory, and, united, made the cause of her impatience to be up and doing.

Emineh Khânum in her garden had talked of marriage and child-bearing as the natural aim of every girl, in terms which struck her English visitor as most indelicate. She (Emineh) herself, she said, was married to a man whom she had never seen—an officer on active service in the Yemen, where there was a war. When that war was over, if God willed, he would return and their marriage would be then completed. When Elsie asked her how she could endure the prospect, she answered with a merry laugh—

“Why should I mind? He is a man, is he not? For me, I know no man except my father and my uncles and my brother and our servants. It is cer-

tain that I could not know to choose a man. I might choose one who was not right to marry. My father, he knows men, he chooses for me."

They were sitting together in the summer-house beside the singing stream. One of the slave-girls, sitting on the river's brink beneath the walnut trees, twanged a lute softly. Emineh went on to expound her views of life. The hope of children was the object, not the man. So long as he was neither wicked, cruel nor repulsive—and he would not be any of those things because her father chose him—she would be content provided that he gave her children—all she wanted.

If she came to love him, that would be from God—an added blessing; but she did not expect to love her husband as she loved her father and brothers or the slaves.

"We have a nobler view of women," interrupted Elsie hotly. "The woman chooses her career just like the man. She is his equal. I don't suppose that I myself shall ever marry."

"I know that many English women do not marry, because there are not enough men for all, and no man is allowed to marry more than one. But you will not be so unfortunate. You are so charming," said Emineh.

"That is not what I mean," cried Elsie, outraged.

"I mean I have no wish to marry. I do not recognize the need you speak of"—here she blushed. "Of course, were I to meet a man whom I could

really love with all my heart, it would be different. But I am not on the look-out for such a man. I have my work to do, and am quite happy, without a thought of the things you speak of. We do not even think of such things, much less name them."

Emineh gave a puzzled sigh.

"It seems so strange to us, and so unnatural," she murmured. "Perhaps that is why you Europeans are so discontented and immoral after marriage, because you never think about these things before."

"But we are not immoral after marriage. It is a most sacred state with us."

"I read in books," replied Emineh Khânun, with a shrug. She lit a cigarette and blew the smoke away.

"In France, perhaps, not England," answered Elsie. "As I say, I have my work to do; I do not regard marriage as the aim of life."

"God made us for that purpose, as it seems to me," Emineh sighed. "But what work have you to do? I did not know."

"I am a missionary, or soon hope to be one," answered Elsie, feeling very bold.

"Ah, you will help your aunts, those kind and generous ladies, with their school. I understand!"

"No, I intend to work upon my own account, somewhere in this country. The people here seem so neglected and ignorant."

"I always feared you were fanatical. . . . But it is good for me to hear that you are not departing

far away from me. Tell me what your purpose is to do."

Miss Wilding then launched forth upon an explanation which the sense of opposition rendered over-vehement. More than a little nervous, she was conscious of her preaching tone, but could not stop it. She wished Emineh to perceive the nobility and beauty of the course of life which she had chosen, and the suspicion which came to her from her companion's startled silence that she was being merely guilty of bad manners added to her irritation. Emineh reclined before her in a pensive attitude, eyes fixed upon the ground.

At the end she said, "I fear I do not understand; it is so different. We others leave such things to Most High God. Ah, here is Fatmeh," she exclaimed upon a glance towards the house. "She is my—nurse, don't you call it? I mean to say she guarded me when I was little. She wished so much to see you."

An old negress veiled in white approached the harbour with salutations and ingratiating grins. Emineh spoke to her in Turkish, when she flung up both her hands in comic horror, then, turning to the visitor, gave forth a torrent of shrill cries enforced by smiles and nods and gestures of assurance.

"I told her that you would not marry, but would be a preacher," said Emineh. "She says that all such talk is nonsense, with your shape. She says that she can see the future. A big strong man will

marry you and give you fifteen—eighteen—twenty children.”

Elsie could not choose but laugh at the prediction, but she went away with feelings of defilement and the resolution never to return. It was on the following day that Dr. Wilson, the physician in charge of the Scottish mission hospital, asked her to marry him. Knowing her wish to ride, he had brought round a horse for her which gave trouble for the first half-hour when they were on crowded roads, but after that, when she desired a gallop, became spiritless. It was all that she could do to urge it to a stumbling canter. She was wondering how any horseman could have chosen such a beast, when she became aware that her companion was addressing her with deep emotion. Turning to him, she noticed that he looked absurd beneath a solar topee and a blue-and-white checked pugaree aflutter in the breeze.

“The life is not the kind of thing which one could ask the average homebred girl to share. But I have heard that you intend to stay here and do missionary work; and that emboldens me.”

He was a big man, with thick eyebrows and a fat moustache, far from ill-looking in a heavy way. She had felt rather attracted by him till this minute. But now, with his proposal, thoughts of “the big strong man,” “the twenty children” prophesied by Emineh’s nurse recurred to her, and she regarded him with downright loathing.

"I plead my cause but badly," he kept droning on, "but you will please understand that I love you dearly and would be the proudest, happiest man on earth if you said 'yes' to me. It makes me mad to think of you working alone among the rascals of this country. It's not fitting for a girl like you, and you can't do any good alone. Let me take care of you and help you, my own lassie!"

"Please stop!" she cried. Had she not been so occupied with his appearance as not to catch the half of what he said, she would have checked him long before he got to that "my own." "I am sorry if anything in my behaviour has made you think I cared for you in that way, for I don't at all."

He behaved extremely well, accepting "No" at once, and talking in a natural voice, though seldom, on the homeward ride. But she felt nauseated by his presence there beside her and dreaded the necessity of meeting him in days to come. Everybody seemed to think that she would be a failure as an independent missionary, that humdrum marriage was her destiny. Well, time should show them.

She longed to get away to work of some kind, to order her own life in her own way. No sooner had Jemîleh mentioned the new house that was to let at Deyr Amûn than Elsie set her heart on seeing it. Yet it was not till some days later that she told her aunts that she had just heard of a furnished house up in the mountains, which she thought of taking for the rest of the summer—perhaps for longer, if

she found it suitable. She made the statement on returning from a visit, so that it might seem that she had heard the news outside the house. That was because she did not wish to name Jemîleh. Her aunts suspected the poor girl of selfish scheming; while Elsie knew that she was quite devoted to her. Upon the great devotion of Jemîleh depended the success of the whole missionary project.

"Where is the house you speak of?" asked Miss Jane.

"At Deyr Amûn."

"That is Jemîleh's village!"

"That is what I thought so fortunate. She can tell me all about it. And I thought of begging you to let her come with me. Will you ride up with me on Monday to inspect the house?"

"I feel too old," remarked Miss Jane. "But your Aunt Sophy would no doubt enjoy the breath of mountain air. This heat is very trying. We must find some respectable native gentleman to accompany you and be your agent with the owner."

As if by pre-arrangement the old maids refrained from comment or expressions of surprise. Miss Jane spoke in an acquiescent tone, as who should say: "You are, we know, quite independent. We have no right to order you, and, as we do not altogether understand you, had better not advise." Elsie, feeling that they guessed what she had failed to tell them, felt small before their perfect equanimity.

VII

ON Monday morning, half-an-hour before the sun rose, an extraordinary cavalcade set out from the house of the English ladies, skirted the city, choosing empty byways, and ambled through the gardens towards the eastern hills. There was Elsie on the thoroughbred which she had newly bought; Miss Sophy and Jemîleh on hired donkeys, the owner of the donkeys being in attendance; Jemîleh's brother Fâris on a raw-boned packhorse which, in Jemîleh's scheme, Miss Wilding was to purchase for him for the sum of eight pounds Turk; and a native scripture-reader from the Scottish mission, who was to be Miss Wilding's spokesman in the bargaining, mounted on his own mule gaudily caparisoned with hanging tassels and small tinkling bells. This dignitary wore a frock coat and black trousers with a flannel shirt, a crimson cord with little tassels serving him for necktie. A black tarbûsh worn far back on his head accentuated the projection of his great hooked nose and bushy grey moustache above a triple chin and an imposing paunch. His name was the Khawâjah Yûsuf, and he spoke much of a son of his named Percy (he pronounced it Barsi) who, it seemed, had made some money in America.. Abbâs

brought up the rear of the procession. He was mounted on an ass which he had borrowed somewhere, which also bore the day's provisions in two saddlebags. A dagger and an antique pistol stuffed his scarlet belt, which, with his fez and scarlet slippers shone in contrast with his white robe, snowy turban and black face and legs. Fâris led the way with conscious pride. It was a gala day for him and for Jemîleh. For a week they had been sending message upon message to their relatives in Deyr Amûn in order to secure a fit reception for their lady. On this account a certain measure of anxiety chastened Jemîleh's joy at setting out.

The sun rose as they crossed a high-backed bridge over a noisy stream which Elsie thought must be the same which sang beside Emineh Khânûm's summer-house, and reached a place where five ways met beneath an ancient ilex. Here they diverged into a sandy bridle-path between hedges rich of perfume in the morning air. All at once Elsie gave her horse the rein and galloped off. Fâris pursued her as in duty bound. The donkeys, moved by that example, broke away. Abbâs, in glee, belaboured his with all his might, uttering strange sounds, agrin from ear to ear. Miss Sophy tried with all her might to check her steed, appealing to the running donkeyman in English. He, misunderstanding her entreaties, beat and prodded the unlucky beast, obliging it to go still faster. The scripture-reader, who was very fat, and could not lay both hands upon the rein

because with one he held up a white sunshade (the which he wished to close but could not owing to his mule's vagaries), feared either that he would drop and so defile that badge of honour, or that it would be caught, he with it, in some overhanging branch, or else that he himself would be thrown off and injured, perhaps killed. He cried out that the pace was madness, they would tire the beasts before arriving at the hard work of the mountains.

Elsie was first to reach the open country. Fâris came next, some hundred yards behind her. Upon the summit of a rise they stopped and waited for the others. These presently emerged from the green wall which the orchards bosoming the city here presented to the plain. The little gust of energy had passed, and they were jogging placidly, the white parasol of the Khawâjah Yûsuf dominating them with a protective air. Abbâs, in rear of the procession, sat back on the hindquarters of his little steed with feet stuck out beside the donkey's ears. Elsie kept with them thenceforth, Fâris resuming his right pace as leader, for he knew the road, which was without a trace upon the sunburnt plain. They reached the hills and journeyed for an hour in and out among the boulders of a wady, keeping to the shady side. A grove of fruit-trees came in sight, plumed with some tall white poplars—the first village. As they rode through it, ragged children followed them, women in doorways veiled their faces as they passed. Turbaned men at work upon the ter-

races stood up to look at them, hands shading eyes.

"Muslims," remarked Jemîleh to her mistress, who was riding near. "A good thing we haf got Abbâs with us. If not, we should haf got a stone or two, I shouldn't wonder."

The Khawâjah Yûsuf, from beneath his parasol, saluted every one they met with great benevolence.

The path grew steeper and more stony. There was no shade to reach above a donkey's saddle. The heat increased. The scripture-reader blew great gusts. His face was streaming. Reaching an eminence, he gave his mule a rest and, dragging out a highly coloured pocket-handkerchief, relieved his brow.

Jemîleh cried, "Our Lord reward thee, O Khawâjah Yûsuf, for the honour thou art doing to our village. The sheykh and all the elders are thy servants and will kiss thy hand. It is not every day that they can hear the voice of one so learned, the author of a famous book of heavenly wisdom."

The Khawâjah Yûsuf had, in fact, compiled a book of Christian maxims which was entitled *Pearls of Chastity*.

"Is it much further?" asked Miss Sophy, much dishevelled.

"No, no, a little way! There is the fillage. Look!" replied Jemîleh, laughing from mere joy of life.

Deyr Amûn was a large village rich in orchards. It lay mapped out before them on a mountain-side

spreading upwards from the brink of a ravine which they must pass to get to it. In the bottom of the gorge appeared a water-mill and other buildings among poplar trees. Facing Deyr Amûn across this chasm there stood a village of much poorer aspect, its houses all mud-roofed and of one storey.

"That is Aïneyn, the Muslim fillage that I told you of," Jemîleh told Miss Wilding as they rode towards it. "They hate the Christians fery much indeed."

After Aïneyn there came a steep descent. The path was like rough steps worn in the rock. The ladies and the scripture-reader here dismounted. Only Abbâs and Fâris kept their seats. At the bottom, in the poplar grove, they called a halt while the procession was re-organized.

Then, as they crossed an old stone bridge beside the mill, the noise of water and the shade refreshing them, a boy in saffron robe and dark tarbûsh vaulted a wall and joined them, smiling broadly. Jemîleh introduced him as her little brother. She made him kiss the hands of the two English ladies and also that of the Khawâjah Yûsuf, who made some demur. A little further on they met a group of twenty persons, all of them in some degree Jemîleh's relatives; and their escort steadily increased as they advanced towards Deyr Amûn. All who had not gone out upon the road to meet them stood on the housetops, in the doorways, or at points of vantage to observe their entry. Flags were flying; little

drums were being beaten by the children, and, to Miss Sophy's infinite alarm, real guns were fired repeatedly quite near to them. Jemîleh beamed.

"You are to be the guests of the sheykh of the fillage—the same whose house we come to see, my father tells me," she informed Miss Wilding.

"But we have brought our luncheon with us," said Miss Sophy, overhearing. "We only want a shady place in which to picnic."

"He'd be offended, miss!" Jemîleh cried. "He has brebared a feast."

They were led up to a solid old stone house with a façade of arches, two of which had been filled in with glass to suit the fashion of the times. Above the third an upper chamber had been added, roofed with tiles, approached from the flat housetop, which it dominated like a tower. The sheykh, a grey-beard with eyes as furtive and alert as fireflies, led them up a flight of steps against the wall to this new room. The ladies entered. The scripture-reader, jibbing at the threshold, protesting that the honour was too much for such as he, the sheykh adjured him not to say such things, which might bring punishment upon them all, but enter quickly. He then seized hold of him and pushed him in.

They had to wait two hours before the feast was ready, but sherbet and some light refreshments were brought in, together with a gramophone which a servant of the sheykh kept going to beguile the time. The meal, when it did come, was served on great

brass trays set upon stools. The scripture-reader raised a cry of incapacity at every course, then ate enormously. Wine from the village vineyards, fruit from the village orchards must be tasted. It seemed as if the compliments would never end. At length Miss Wilding whispered to Jemîleh that she wished to see the house without delay.

"Upon my head," replied their host, when the suggestion reached him. "Tell the lady that, by Allah, all our pleasure is obedience."

At his command a servant brought him a great iron key, with which in hand he led them down to the meydân where the crowd waited. Led by the sheykh and his guests the concourse streamed along two terraced fields to a house entirely modern in appearance beneath a red-tiled roof. Before it grew a clump of umbrella pines. Jemîleh, watching her beloved's face, knew that she was taken with the first sight of the place. Indoors she whispered to the sheykh to let the ladies roam at will, and give his whole attention to the scripture-reader, who would do the bargaining.

In the entrance-hall a great reception was then held, while Elsie and Miss Sophy viewed the upper rooms. The sheykh expounded the whole house to the Khawâjah Yûsuf, giving him the history of its construction from the first idea, with every detail of the cost that he could call to mind. A hundred and twenty French pounds a year was not too much to ask for rent for such a house, now was it? By Al-

lah, he could get that money for the summer only from the Khawâjah Michaelides, the rich banker.

The Khawâjah Yûsuf thought that fifty English pounds a year would be a reasonable rent to ask. A murmur of approval filled the room. Fifty English pounds had been the ultimate price in the sheykh's mind, as all the village knew. He had not expected anything like so much for a first offer.

Again the sheykh conversed with the Khawâjah Yûsuf as the apple of his eye, praising God for letting their poor village gaze upon the countenance of such a man, so wise, so virtuous. His honour, when at meat, had deigned to praise the village wine, the village olives and dried figs. A jar of the said wine, a sack of the said olives and dried figs were already on their journey to his honour's house. On this same day of every year, please God, a similar gift would be received by him from Deyr Amûn as tribute due, in memory of his most gracious visit.

"Well, seventy French pounds. But that is my last word," said the Khawâjah Yûsuf, with a smile of vast indulgence.

"For thy sake, so be it," said the sheykh, with a huge shrug, "though, Allah witness, I defraud myself in the agreement. For the sake of thy dear chin, then, so be it!"

The ladies came from their inspection of the house, the whole room rising on their entrance with choice blessings. The place of honour was resigned to them.

"I like the house," Elsie assured Jemîleh. "And the furniture, what there is of it, is better than I had expected. There only remains the question of the rent."

The scripture-reader turned to Elsie with an air of triumph.

"It is settled," he informed her. "You bay seventy French bounds."

"That sounds a great deal," said Miss Sophy Berenger.

The scripture-reader smiled indulgently. "Ten years ago, berhabs, dear lady. Not to-day. Efry-thing is now dearer in this country." Lowering his voice, he said, "I tell you so, you can belief me. I beat him down and down. He wish to blease you. You will not find another such a place so cheab as this. I know that my son Barsi would bay more for rent."

Elsie agreeing, he addressed the landlord at some length, announcing that the English lady was content with the rent named and congratulating Deyr Amûn upon the acquisition of a benefactress.

"Well, I'm glad that's settled," exclaimed Elsie with a sigh. Jemîleh instantly translated the remark, making it appear a compliment to Deyr Amûn. The sheykh sprang forth and kissed the lady's hand. The room rose with a shout of praise, and rushed upon her.

Blushing, half afraid, she begged Jemîleh to restrain them; but Jemîleh, weeping with delight, re-

plied, "They do quite right. You are now like our queen. We are so fery bleased you come to lif with us." By the time this tumult had subsided, the light which came through the great window of the hall had softened; it was past the middle of the afternoon. Cups of coffee were presented to the visitors, who, having emptied them, rose to depart.

Elsie paused upon the terrace to take in the view. It had been a dazzle when they came two hours before. Now purple shadows covered half the wady, a glimpse of the distant plain had the colour of ripe wheat, the hills beyond were of the purest azure. There was colour everywhere.

The crowd, which had stood still, awaiting her good pleasure, moved when she moved, and chattered once again. They returned to the meydân of the sheykh's house, where Abbâs, Fâris and the donkey-man had the beasts ready.

"Abûna has not joined us. Why is that?" said Fâris, who had brought out Elsie's horse, to his father, who was holding it while he took up the girths.

"He sulks," was the reply. "He says that Brûtêtants are devils. He threatens us with Hell hereafter, he is so annoyed about thy lady's coming. We had kept it from him till to-day. The thing is new to him. To-morrow, please God, he will be more reasonable. Poor men must live! He will remember that. He will not excommunicate us as he

threatens. Every one knows that Brûtestânts are heretics, but——”

“Hush!” whispered Fâris. “Behold the offspring of all filth draws nigh!” His father, looking round in some dismay, beheld the scripture-reader, fat and smiling, his black fez tilted at a rakish angle. Unobtrusively he crossed himself and breathed a curse on renegades.

VIII

THE church at Deyr Amûn, built upon a knee of the mountain overlooking the whole village, differed from the flat-roofed houses adjacent to it only in possessing a square doorway, white-washed to be seen afar, and a small turret at one corner of its terrace-roof holding a little bell of clamorous tongue. The bell had hung there now for fifty years, but the old wooden gong which called to prayer in days when church-bells were forbidden in the Ottoman dominions still stood inside the door, and was still used at solemn moments of the service to bespeak attention. The bell was silent now, the church was empty, though its door stood open, showing depths of gloom, for there was not a window. It was the morrow of the day of Elsie's visit. The sun was near to setting; Deyr Amûn with all its lands was bathed in rosy light, while the village of Aïneyn across the wady, distant but half-a-mile as the crow flies, was plunged already in the evening shadow.

Antun, the parish priest of Deyr Amûn, sat cross-legged with his back to the church wall, forming, with a number of the males of his flock, who also crossed their legs or squatted, a rough circle, behind

which hovered groups of women with embroidered headshawls, listening with all their ears. Children were playing on the outskirts of the throng. Now and then a woman turned to censure or cuff one of them who at the moment happened to be making too much noise.

The priest was evidently angry, though his mien was calm. He was telling certain persons what he thought about them.

"But, O our father, deign to listen," cried the sheykh of the village in a tone of fierce entreaty. "Thou speakest as a priest—a prophet, one might say, by Allah! for the justice of thy speech is undeniable. Thou thinkest of the truths of our religion. But I, the civil head of this community, speak naturally from another point of view. I consider the material welfare of this village. The lady is a Brûtestânt, that is well known—a heretic, we all agree to that. But, by the blessing of the Highest, she is wealthy, and of small intelligence. She gives away her money easily. We have the word of the daughter of old Abu Fâris here for that. Allah knows how we all grieve that thou wast absent yesterday, else thou hadst heard the statement from the girl's own lips. She it is who governs every movement of the Englishwoman, and she told us plainly what the benefits will be. First, there will be a school where all our sons will be instructed in the lore of Europe which enables men to earn much money and gain high positions in the world.

Then there will be another school where girls will learn refinement; a dispensary, where sick folk will be healed for nothing, and, in due time, no doubt, a hospital.

"Then view the matter, O beloved, in another aspect. With the Englishwoman resident among us, our grievances will quickly reach the powers of Europe. If the tax-farmer oppress us, he will hear about it. He will be taught to respect us and reduce exactions in our favour; and thus, since he must raise a certain sum, will throw the weight of his extortion upon other villages—chiefly upon the Muslims, who have no foreign protectors. Thus we gain doubly, by our own relief and by the extra burden laid upon our neighbors.

"Again, suppose there should be war and that the Turks should come to seize our beasts as usual for the army, can we not make them over to the Englishwoman for the time, placing them on her ground or in her stable? And she, being above the law, will save them for us. Let but a few of us appear to listen to her preaching, and it is certain she will do all this and more. The Consul also, her protector, will protect us, regarding us almost as Englishmen."

The sheykh, concluding, shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands, expressing thus his inability to comprehend how any Christian man could frown at such a prospect.

His speech had not passed without interruption.

The priest, with eyes now turned in horror up to Heaven, now rolling round with fierce contempt on the opponent ranks, had called on God for patience at short intervals; and his supporters had from time to time expressed dissent. From the women also had come angry murmurs.

Before replying, Antun rolled a cigarette and put a light to it deliberately. He fixed his hot brown eyes upon the distant ridge, which stood up dark against the lighted sky, as he blew off the first smoke. Then turning to the sheykh, he said with bitter sarcasm—

“All very pretty, O beloved. You grow rich; you have your schools; your children grow up Franks and give themselves grand airs, like this admired Jemîleh; you enjoy the protection of the Consul, and oppress your neighbours; you have your hospital and your dispensary, and all for nothing! Very pretty—in this fleeting world where men were meant to suffer for the faith, and train their souls by discipline to gain salvation! But one thing you shall not escape by favour of your Englishwoman or protection of the Powers of Europe. The judgment of the Lord awaits you surely. What will you say when questioned of your life on earth? ‘The way was plain, yet we diverged from it. The truth was known to us, yet we applauded lies. We said, as say the Franks: ‘Let us be comfortable! A pill is better than a prayer for health. Perpetual fatness is better than the many fasts the Church pre-

scribes. To build a house is better than to build a church. To store up wealth is better than to save one's soul. We turned our back upon the Sacraments because they brought us no advancement in the world, and followed after infidels who gave us gold. We whispered with the Franks: Who knows if there is any God?" "

At that arose loud cries of horror and applause. Old Abu Fâris shouted—

"God forbid! Thou liest, O our father! We shall not say that!"

"What think you that our Lord will answer you? There can be no question. The judgment on you is already known. You know it, though you would suppress the knowledge in your hearts. There will be no escape for sinners of your sort, nor any mercy. You will fry in Hell eternally and the devil (may God curse him) and his angels will find recreation in pushing your poor, charred but everliving bodies to the heart of the fire. Wealth and comfort for a day and this eternally. Now you know your lot in this world and the next."

The conflicting shouts rose louder than before. A woman called out—

"Hear him! Hear our father! His words are binding through eternity!"

"Not when uttered without understanding of the case before him," cried the sheykh of the village, between wrath and terror. "Allah Most High is perfectly aware that the case is not at all as stated by

our father Antun. The conversation will be other than as he describes it. Our Lord will say: 'Wherefore did you consort on earth with dirty heretics?' and we shall answer: 'Allah witness that our intention in so doing was not evil. We sought thereby to benefit God's people. By doing so we helped to raise the true church in our land above the Muslims, Kâtûlíks and other infidels and heretics, thus preparing the great day when we shall say to all those others: 'Be orthodox—or perish, every one.' And Allah, seeing our good purpose, will exclaim, 'Well done,' or at the worst will order us a minute's beating. That is the right view of our purpose, neighbours. Our father, in his anger, does us wrong."

"Allah! Allah!" moaned the priest as one in pain. "Behold you Brûtestânts already in your reasoning. What know you of the things of Heaven or the words of God? If you do this thing"—his angry tone here sank to a low snarl—"you all shall fry eternally. By Allah, I can hear your shrieks and anguished groans. The odour of your burning fat is in my nostrils."

The father of Jemîleh, who had long been restless, could bear his fear no longer, but ran forward and flung himself upon the ground before the priest, exclaiming—

"Have mercy, O our father! I am poor! Wealth, education, healing, are, Allah knows, much needed in our village. There is but one way to obtain them and that way is foul. But thou hast

power from Allah, thou canst cleanse it for us. Give us but absolution, and we shall be saved."

The sheykh and all his party cried, "Well said! Absolve us, O our father, for our crime is pardonable!"

"I shall not give you absolution, sons of dogs!" replied the priest. Beset by a whole crowd of eager suppliants, he turned aside his face this way and that, and motioned "No" incessantly with both his hands.

A young man in a robe of yellow thinly striped with green, a new tarbûsh, white socks and yellow slippers came along a lower terrace, ducking to avoid the branches of the mulberry trees, and, climbing up a wall, drew near the throng. He carried in his hands a golden-headed cane with which he rapped his way into the centre of the circle. It was the Sheykh Bakîr, the great man of the place.

"What is it, O our father?" he asked coolly, squatting down at the priest's side, where room was made for him. Plucking a cigarette-case from the bosom of his robe, he offered of its contents to those near him. By the time he had helped himself therefrom, and had obtained a light, the general din of explanation had subsided and he could hear what Abu Fâris and the priest were saying.

"He ought to promise us his absolution!"

"That will I not! The sin is much too vile. Nor is it lawful to give absolution to a man beforehand except when holy war has been declared."

"I do not say 'beforehand.' But he ought to promise to absolve us of our guilt from time to time in measure as it soils our spirits."

"Do thou decide between us, O my lord," exclaimed the headman of the village. "Make him be merciful, or we shall lose great blessings."

"Aye, O my lord! Be kind! Make peace between them," came as chorus from the women in the background.

The handsome youth, to whom they thus appealed, smiled pleasantly, but said, "Undoubtedly it is a sin that you propose. Our father is quite right to blame you for it."

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed the priest exultantly. "Have I not told you? You will burn for ever!"

"A sin is less in deed than in intention," contended one of his opponents. "A sin with good intentions is but half a crime."

The priest was whispering with Sheykh Bakîr. At length he said, with a malicious grin—

"If you are true sons of our holy Church, if you really wish to be made clean of guilt, you will pay me two mejîdis for each absolution."

"O Lord Most High, suppose that one should want absolving every week, I should be ruined. Be more reasonable," moaned Abu Fâris.

The priest laughed out. "You bargain on the brink of Hell? Have I not power to throw you in or hold you out? But I have pity on your fool—

ishness. Promise to pay me twenty pounds each year, and I will give absolution to you all from time to time as each requires it—for this sin and no other, be it understood!”

“O Antun. O thou evil joker! May thy house be destroyed! This is too bad,” complained the headman amid roars of laughter.

“Take it or leave it,” said the priest with a broad grin. “That or hell-fire: the choice is here before you.”

“Well, we accept,” replied the headman sadly. “I guarantee the money rather than forgo the Englishwoman’s benefits. But Allah knows thou art a foul extortioner!”

“And Allah knows thou are a fouler sinner!” laughed the priest.

“Praise to Allah, that is settled,” said the Sheykh Bakîr.

“Nay, wait a minute!” shouted Abu Fâris. “Antun must promise not to taunt us with this sin on all occasions as his manner is. It is a shame for him to use divine authority to frighten harmless people from their wits——”

The priest transfixed the speaker with a railing eye, exclaiming—

“Ha, I had forgotten thee. Thou must pay something extra, since thy house profits before any other. Five pounds yearly. Thou canst obtain the money from thy son and daughter easily. And even

thus, thou must not miss a single fast day, or everlasting fire will be thy portion."

The old man fled into the background of the circle amid jeers. No other of the schemers risked a protest. The priest, they knew, was having jokes at their expense, but his supernatural powers, combined with knowledge of their private faults, made joking terrible. Twilight was stealing on. Already lights shone in the village, surrounded with rich colour like the peacock's eyes. The women and children had dispersed. There fell a silence.

Across the wady came a tiny thread of sound, like a bird's cry tremendously prolonged. The muezzin of Aïneyn was calling to the sunset prayer. Several of the Christians crossed themselves and muttered curses on the infidel. They knew that the muezzin's chant attracted devils.

"Praise Allah, all of you," the priest exclaimed, "that you are not, as they are, burdened with the sins of all your lives, and of the lives of all your fathers since the days of Adam. The power to remit sins continually is the greatest proof that God is with the Church. The Kâtûlíks pretend to have it, but how can they truly, being unbaptized? The Brûtestânts and Muslims have no help of this sort. Their sins increase upon them. How can they be saved? No Muslim could commit a sin like that which you propose without the certainty of Hell hereafter."

There rose a murmur of applause. The audience

was edified. Every man crossed himself and rendered praise to God. It put them once more on good terms with Antun that he had shown them this irrefragable proof of true religion.

IX

THE apparent equanimity with which Elsie's aunts received the news of her resolve to live at Deyr Amûn and start some kind of mission there concealed no small anxiety on her account. Her only brother was in India with his regiment. Apart from him the two old ladies were her nearest relatives, and they were conscious of responsibility for her behaviour without the slightest power to control it.

"I do not like the thought of your living there alone. I know that you will have Jemîleh with you, but she is no companion for a girl of your upbringing," hazarded Miss Jane Berenger in tones of pleasant argument. "I should be happier if you would join one of the missionary societies. They would be glad of a voluntary helper, and could instruct you how to set to work effectively."

"I like that," answered Elsie with vivacity, "when you, my most respected aunts, remain as independent as I hope to be of those societies."

"We have always tried to work in with them," said Miss Sophy, looking rather pained. "We have bowed to their decisions even when we thought them wrong."

"I couldn't work with anything so lifeless!" cried the girl. "Nothing strikes me more here than the utter absence of enthusiasm—without which nothing can be done, it seems to me. My work, of course, will be quite small at first, but I believe that I shall do more good than they do."

"I have no doubt of your enthusiasm, dear. My doubt is of your perseverance," said Miss Jane.

The two aunts looked at one another and exchanged a smile. Conscious of their own incompetence, and yet desirous that some one with authority should talk to Elsie, they went to call upon the British Consul secretly while the subject of misgiving was out riding one hot morning. They wished to spare the child the pain of disillusionment, which they thought would be the outcome of her missionary scheme. Let her live at Deyr Amûn, by all means, if it pleased her, for a time.

The Consul ruffled up his hair distractedly. "Why can't you pack her off to where she came from? Why can't she fall in love and marry?" he exclaimed in accents of despair. "Any missionary's bad enough, but an independent lady missionary (you'll excuse me) is the very deuce! I acted consul at Jerusalem for just six months, and had enough of independent lady missionaries for a lifetime. They do no end of mischief, set the natives by the ears, all with the best intention in the world. It's no use talking to them any more than to a lunatic."

The ladies listened to this outburst with indulgent smiles. The goodness of the speaker's heart was known to them.

"But we ourselves are independent lady missionaries, so you can't expect us to agree with you," remarked Miss Jane.

"My dear Miss Berenger! You never were a firebrand, were you? You and Miss Sophia never caused a riot in a city, or stirred up tribes to kill their neighbours or burn villages. That is the sort of thing the women I complain of do continually—always with the best intentions, as I said before."

"We really are extremely worried about Elsie," sighed Miss Sophy.

"Well, I must try and have a word with her," the Consul said.

The little English colony possessed a tennis club, whose members met in the late afternoons upon a tolerable patch of sward, hedged round with roses, and partly shaded by the fruit-trees of adjoining orchards. The court lay well outside the city, whose old ruined walls, with little flat-roofed dwellings built upon them, and two aspiring minarets beyond, were seen from thence. That afternoon there was the usual gathering in this pleasaunce, with the addition of a dark-skinned youth in spotless flannels, a tie of many brilliant colours, and a ribbon of the same about his new straw hat, whom the missionaries addressed as Percy, seeming pleased to see him. It was in fact the son of the Khawâjah Yûsuf, as

Elsie soon discovered, for the portly scripture-reader introduced him to her with much ceremony. The young man was exceedingly polite, but she disliked him because he spoke with a strong Yankee accent, using "You bet" instead of "Yes" as an affirmative, and seemed inclined to dance attendance on her. She was grateful when the Consul came and rescued her, inviting her to take a walk with him among the gardens.

"What is this I hear about your turning missionary? It can't be true," he said abruptly, when they were alone.

"It's true," said Elsie, with a smile and blush. "Have you any objection?"

"Well, what do you hope to do? There's nothing useful to be done out here, and Heaven knows there's plenty to be done at home. Whatever possessed our people to send missionaries here at all, I can't imagine—one understands the French and Germans doing it for a political move—unless it was to teach us consuls patience. It's a pleasant country if you like adventure. You can keep a horse here and enjoy full leisure cheaper than you could at home. But, then, why call yourself a missionary?"

"Now, I'm going to talk very straight to you. I'm old enough to be your father, and I stand in *loco parentis* to every British subject in this place, your aunts included. This is what will happen. You'll settle up at Deyr Amûn and all the riff-raff of the native churches will hang round you for their

bread and butter. You'll start a school and educate them much above their station, making them bump-tious and unpleasant to their neighbours."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," retorted Elsie. "If you want to know, I mean to work among the Muslims."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the Consul, with a frantic gesture—and paused, with head dropped forward, as if robbed of speech. She looked offended. Presently he raised his head and went on speaking, staring straight before him: "And then you'll get stoned, perhaps killed; and I shall have to bully the authorities for compensation for what, after all, will have been your own mad fault. What harm has any Muslim—or for the matter of that, any British consul either—ever done you that you should think of perpetrating such a deed as this?"

"I don't understand you. The Muslims have persecuted and oppressed the Christians for centuries. They have robbed them, massacred them——"

"Stop a minute! Just you go round the country to the different villages, and then come back and tell me where you found most evidence of wealth and comfort—among the Muslims or among the Christians! The Christians are exempt from military service which continually decimates the Muslim population. They are cockered up and educated by the various missions, backed up by the foreign consuls. There is far more want and wretchedness among the Muslims."

"All the more reason one should go to them."

"What can you do? You must be very conceited if you think that you, a mere girl fresh from England, will succeed where people of experience acknowledge failure. The Muslims—even the very poorest of them—are extremely proud. Their pride is practically all that is now left to them. Like all proud people, being in misfortune, their one desire is to be left alone. Your preaching—the preaching of an unveiled woman of the people they regard as enemies—will seem an insult to them. They may avenge it; and then what bitter outcry for their wholesale punishment! Will it be their fault or yours? Answer me, as a gentlewoman!"

"I don't agree with you at all," said Elsie lamely, with her face averted. "And I really don't know why you talk like this. I am hardly the courageous person that you seem to think me. My efforts to do good will be—well, tentative. I mean I shall do nothing till I know my ground."

The Consul sent a note that evening to Miss Berenger, informing her of his success.

X

THE Sheykh Bakîr of Deyr Amûn was no fanatic. Being young and deeply interested in the passing scene, he viewed religious controversy from a cheerful distance. He knew, of course, that the belief in which he had been born was the correct one; but the presence of the others in the world did not annoy him, nor did he bear the least ill-will towards their followers. His family had always been on good terms with the Turks, who recognized its chieftainship among the Christian mountaineers; many of his forebears had held high positions in the Turkish Government, and he himself, though young, was a mudîr, with jurisdiction over Deyr Amûn and two adjacent villages. He could not feel that bitter hatred of the Muslim which rankled in the breasts of other Christians. He had heard his grandfather declare that this was something new, the bad result of foreign interference. Before the Muscovites and Franks began their meddling, the old gentleman had been wont to say, Christians and Muslims understood each other and were better neighbours. And Bakîr, as he rode abroad on his blood mare, receiving the salute of all and sundry in response to his frank smile, did not consider them bad neighbours even now.

Having been to a Roman Catholic college to learn French, to a Protestant institution to learn English, he did not share the horror which those heresies inspired in theologians. A lazy, easy-tempered lad, he had always found himself in tacit opposition to instructors who essayed to drive him. But experience had taught him that in all religions there were joyous human creatures like himself—good fellows who preferred their ease to drudgery; and such human creatures, even though they might be heathens, he deemed more truly of one faith with him than any masters or instructors whatsoever, though of perfect orthodoxy.

Civilization, education and the ways of Europe, for which the common Christians clamoured as a means to distance the Mahometans, impressed him as a poor delusion. He had tried that way and knew that it entailed a great deal of discomfort in the shape of too much hurry, too much work. One thing only in the European system still attracted him, and that was the free intercourse between the sexes. In this respect the Frankish way of living had manifest advantages for eager youth, which craves temptation as a flower craves sunlight, but loves not the pursuit of sordid vice. Yet he did not in his conscience judge it better than the Oriental system, to which he thought a wise man would return at marriage. Occasionally he had dreamed of seeing Europe, but the project was no more than an amusing dream. He had the faith of a contented

youth that all good things would come to him without fatigue, and the coming of a young and lovely English lady to his village tended to confirm him in that simple faith. Other Frankish ladies would be sure to visit her; and he, the one polite, important person in the place, would get to know them. The missionary errand of Miss Wilding he did not take seriously.

“Allah knows, our priest is very clever—may his house be destroyed!” he remarked one morning to Abdullah Shukri, his body-servant and inseparable companion. “He does not really feel the slightest apprehension that this Englishwoman will seduce men from the Church. All the fuss he made about her coming yesterday, threatening to excommunicate quite half the village, was but a ruse to get a little money, and frighten some who have neglected their religious duties. It pleases me to think that she is coming, and I shall do my best to make her stay agreeable. Indeed, I side with Hanna and old Abu Fâris rather than with Antun, though I took his part against them in the argument.”

“Our father has intelligence, by Allah,” replied Abdullah Shukri, with a chuckle. “He knew that they would try to keep the profit to themselves and so took toll of them on public grounds. The right is with him, as I see the matter. Old Abu Fâris is a proper rogue, and so—in secret be it said—is our respected headman. It were better for the lady to take up with men of honour like Your Highness and,

I say it boldly, like our father Antun. The priest is sly against the sly, and clever with the rogues, but he would never stoop to wrong the helpless."

"There is much in what thou sayest," yawned the Sheykh Bakîr.

This conversation took place in the young man's bedroom ere he rose to dress. Abdullah, bringing in his cup of coffee, always squatted by the bed and talked awhile. Bakîr lay on his back, with hands behind his head upon the pillow. The empty coffee-cup was on the tray the servant held.

"Is there any one outside?" inquired Bakîr.

"There is the steward of Your Honour's property at Sûk Harîr, with Bûtrus, Saba and Habîb, the usual crew."

"Bring the water for my washing. I will join them presently."

While the young sheykh was dressing with his servant's help, he flung back the wooden shutters from a little window at the head of the bed, placed there for ventilation, not for light. The room was at once freshened with the morning breeze, and he could see across a gully fledged with fruit-trees, a red-roofed house upon an eminence, half-hidden by a clump of umbrella pines.

"We shall go up there shortly. Saddle the mare," he told Adbullah Shukri.

After talking for ten minutes to the man from Sûk Harîr, the Sheykh Bakîr went out and mounted his bay mare. Attended by Abdullah Shukri, on a

coal-black stallion, and about a score of other persons, some on foot, some mounted, including the steward of the Sûk Harîr estate, who rode a tall white donkey, he set off down a steep and stony path, meandering, like the watercourse it was in winter, between banks surmounted by rough garden-walls and overhung by fruit-trees. The road plunged down into a little glen, then climbed up roundabout with many zigzags, many branchings, till it came out on the terrace of the Englishwoman's house. Here the horses were tied up beneath the pine-trees, and Bakîr, attended faithfully by all his court, went on into the house, of which the door stood open. Inside was the whole clan of Abu Fâris, the women cleaning out the rooms and scrubbing floors, bare-footed children playing everywhere, while Abu Fâris himself, his brothers, and his grown-up nephews, looked on and smoked, and spat from time to time. Chairs were placed for the young nobleman and his led captains, while the humbler crowd sat round upon their heels.

"When does the Sitt arrive?" inquired Bakîr with interest.

"After two days, if God wills, O my lord. Some beds and other furniture arrive to-day."

"Why does she trouble to buy things?" exclaimed the well-born youth impatiently. "Have I not furnished houses which I never use? Let her but mention her requirements, I will send the things. Where was thy mind, O Abu Fâris, not to think of me?"

The father of Jemîleh smiled, beseeching pardon; but his eyes were furtive and the puckers of his mouth expressed despair. He resented the cool tone of the young lord, as if the English Sitt and her arrival had been his concern. He resented this intrusion of the laughing crowd. He offered coffee, thinking they would then depart. But they did nothing of the kind. Bakîr walked up and down the house, examined every room and piece of furniture, and stopped at every window to admire the view. It was past noon when the gay crowd went out again on to the terrace, and then Bakîr proclaimed his will to lunch there.

He sent a nephew of old Abu Fâris running to the cookshop half-a-mile away. The messenger returned much sooner than he was expected, accompanied by the sheykh of the village, who had met him on the way and, hearing that the Sheykh Bakîr was on his property, came now to claim the great one as his honoured guest. The sheykh of the village, the official headman, had been a servant to the father of the Sheykh Bakîr.

"May thy wealth increase, O Hanna," cried the youth. "Thou wast ever the lord of kindness. Extend thy kindness further, I beseech thee; join us at the meal."

"To hear is to obey," replied the headman, already on his way to fetch the food. Old Abu Fâris went with him to help. He whispered—

"Curse the father of that ass. He talks as if the

Sitt were his of right! . . . Allah! Allah! . . . How to drive him off!"

"Fear nothing," answered Hanna. "He is not a schemer. The behaviour that thou blamest is inherent in him, coming of so high a family."

The luncheon was not over when three camels came in sight, bringing the new furniture. Bakîr and his attendants must needs stay to watch the business of unloading.

It was the same upon the next day and the next, though after the first visit the young lord had luncheon brought from his own house. The presence of the Sheykh Bakîr attracted every idler in the village. On the evening when the Sitt at length arrived, the space before her house was packed with sightseers and a score of horses were tied up along the boundary wall. It was with a glow of triumph that, upon a whisper from Jemîleh, old Abu Fâris strode among the crowd, proclaiming: "The Sitt is tired after her long journey. Her desire is privacy. She bids you to withdraw immediately."

By the coming of that blessed lady he had gained a voice of high authority which none had ever heard from him before. His brow had donned a new severity. The crowd dispersed with sympathetic murmurs.

But on the morrow, long before the Sitt was up, when Abu Fâris came up with his donkey, bringing water from the spring, he found the platform once more thick with people squatting or reclining; and,

even as he looked upon them with a dubious eye, the Sheykh Bakîr and all his company arrived on horseback.

"Bring chairs out here for us, O Abu Fâris," cried the noble youth as he dismounted. "We will await the levee of the Sitt."

"Allah cut short thy life and curse thy father," thought the old fellâh. "Am I thy father's slave, or what, to do thy bidding always?" Aloud he said, "I will inquire, my lord."

Tying up his ass, he went indoors.

"The youth is rich and powerful," replied Jemîleh to his grumbling. "It will not do for us to anger him. Take out some chairs."

"He treats me like a dog," the old man growled.

"What matter?" laughed Jemîleh. "His coming hither with this mighty concourse proclaims aloud the honour of our lady, which is ours."

The old man hung about the house, disconsolate. At the fourth hour of the day Jemîleh came to him in great distress. By then the space before the house was covered with a crowd whose murmur could be heard through all the house. Horses stamped and neighed. Some girls were singing to the beat of little drums.

"What—what are we to do?" Jemîleh cried. "My lady is but now awake and very cross. She heard the noise and looked out of the window. She says the land is hers and must be private. No one must come who has not business at the house. If people

wish to visit her, she says, they must come hither in the afternoon, and singly, not in crowds. She orders me to drive them all away. How can I do so? It will seem an insult. Before a man so high in honour as the Sheykh Bakîr!" Hot tears streamed down her cheeks. She wrung her hands.

"Fear not! Leave all to me!" said Abu Fâris.

He thereupon went out and shouted to the nearest of the crowd, mere children—

"Yallah! Get you gone! This land is the Sitt's property. She orders you to go away, and give her quiet." He went on through the crowd, repeating his request in terms adapted to the divers persons. When no one made a move he feigned great anguish, crying that the lady willed it, and that he, her servant, would be punished if they did not go.

"What is the matter?" cried the Sheykh Bakîr, whom Abu Fâris in his tour had not approached.

"I grieve profoundly, O most gracious Highness," whined the old fellâh. "Behold me but a servant under orders. In the Sitt's name I have to ask Your Highness with all this concourse to depart at once, and not again to throng her ground without permission. The Lord forgive me! She is but a Frank, a stranger to our ways."

"Will not the Sitt see visitors?"

"I cannot say, O Excellency. Doubtless she will receive visits at her gracious pleasure. My duty now is to entreat you to withdraw. Her wish at present is for privacy."

"It is hers to command," replied Bakîr agreeably. Abdullah Shukri ran to fetch the horses. "After her journey she is doubtless weary. Present to her my salutations, I beseech thee."

"To hear is to obey," said Abu Fâris grimly. "At present I must ask you to withdraw."

The common crowd by then was moving off with awestruck murmurs. Old Abu Fâris stood and watched the Sheykh Bakîr and his attendant mount and ride away, the young lord putting his bay mare through all her paces as they passed the windows. He gave a cackle in his throat and muttered—

"Praise to Allah!"

XI

THE hope of blessed privacy had been with Elsie when she left the city and rode up to Deyr Amûn. She was all the more annoyed to find a crowd awaiting her on what she now considered her own private ground. She bade Jemîleh tell the trespassers to go away. But when next morning she awoke to hear the murmur of as great a multitude and, peeping from her bedroom window, saw the people waiting, she grew downright angry. There were mules and horses tethered to the wall where she intended to put flowering plants, men, women and children were sitting as of right all over her front garden, and men were actually going round selling refreshments as in public places. The gathering was picturesque, a very flower-bed, but she could not see its beauty on her private land. At her command, conveyed to them by Abu Fâris, the multitude indeed dispersed. But certain groups remained to be got rid of separately; and all day long fresh parties kept arriving with intent to settle down before the house.

"You do not understand, Miss Elsie!" wailed Jemîleh, after she had been sent out after trespassers, as Elsie called them, for the twentieth time. "It is their custom and they mean it as a combli-

ment. They come like that before the houses of important beebles such as brinces, bishops and tax-gatherers. I don't know what you mean by trespassers. These beebles do no sin, they make no damage. In this country no one minds the beebles coming. It hurts their feelings that you tell them 'Go away!'

"I am sorry," was Miss Wilding's firm reply. "But I cannot have them coming in my garden."

"All right. I'll tell them. But they'll think it strange," muttered Jemileh very grudgingly.

But in spite of all that she could do, in spite of her repeated stern commands and most indignant pleading, fresh "trespassers" appeared continually. Returning from an argument with a whole family party, which had come up with two camels and a donkey, and begun unloading provisions, cooking utensils, even bedding, on the terrace with a view to camp there, she announced—

"They come from Mâr Yuhanna, a whole day from here. They bring you presents—honey and fine raiment. They wish so much to see you and to ask your favour. It seems a shame to tell them 'go away,' like that, as if they was rude beebles. Will you not go and speak some words to them? They bring you presents from their country—wine and honey and some pretty needlework."

Elsie, for once, was moved to be more gracious. But the news that she had honoured certain strangers ran like wildfire through the village, and

in an hour the eager crowd was back again. When Jemîleh came for orders how to deal with them, saying reproachfully, "You see! They do not understand though I haf told them," the Englishwoman pressed her throbbing temples with both hands.

"Tell them," she murmured wearily, "that I am willing to see visitors each afternoon at certain hours—say four to six."

"That is only for imbortant beebles," said Jemîleh, with an obstinate protrusion of her underlip. "How about the boor ones what you would not care to haf for friends? You had better get it ofer now for always."

"Oh, I'll do anything you like, to get rid of them."

Jemîleh ran to organize the great reception. Elsie had a headache and would rather have been left alone. However, when Jemîleh came to say that all was ready, she went down to the entrance hall, now packed with men, while other men with the horde of women and children peeped from the terrace through the open door.

"Say what you think right for me," she told Jemîleh, who thereupon embarked upon a speech of welcome and unbounded patronage, which roused applause. Jemîleh's mother and another woman brought in trays with cups of coffee which they handed round. If all that crowd were to be served with coffee the rite bade fair to be interminable. "Can't I go away now?" inquired Elsie in a whisper.

"Yes, that's all right," replied Jemîleh, "I'll just tell them." She spoke a word or two. The whole room rose while Elsie made a hurried, not ungraceful exit.

After that there was no throng upon the terrace, but individuals occasionally strolled there, always to Elsie's bitter indignation. And in accordance with Jemîleh's proclamation that Elsie would see persons of distinction in the afternoon, a score of worthies called upon Miss Wilding, among them the young Sheykh Bakîr.

"I isbeak English. I am fery habby that you come to lif in this beastly hole. I luf you awf'ly and wish to know you," was the noble youth's first greeting. Elsie was forced to laugh, and, happening to meet the speaker's eyes, which were entirely honest, she laughed cordially, feeling at home with him thenceforward.

She would have been very glad to see him when he called each day, but for his train of courtiers, among whom were men whose tone she found offensive; and if receiving the young sheykh meant seeing them, she feared that she would have to close her door to him. This feeling she confided to Jemîleh, who, thinking it a pity that the noble youth, whose company she valued on her own account, should be denied the house, called him apart one afternoon as he was going out, and told him of her mistress's objection.

"To hear is to obey," exclaimed Bakîr in great

surprise. "By Allah, she is right. My friends are pigs."

He had given no thought to his adherents until now, nor questioned the inherent right of every one who wished to do so to bear him company. But now that his attention had been called to them, he saw that they left much to be desired. Forthwith he told them his opinion frankly, to the rapture of Abdullah Shukri, who abhorred those sycophants.

"Ha, ha!" cried one, an ancient rogue by name Mansûr, who wore his tarbûsh at a rakish angle and sat his sorry nag with a grand air. "The lady grants thee favours. She will welcome thee alone. By Allah, thou art fortunate, O sly one!"

"Be silent!" cried Bakîr, with more of anger than any of those present could remember to have seen him show in all his life before. "This Englishwoman is my sister; dost thou understand? Speak thus of her again, I will destroy thee!"

"Forgiveness, O my lord. I did but jest, by Allah. God knows that I revere the lady above all the world."

A hush of awe descended on the servile group.

That declaration of the Sheykh Bakîr, reported far and wide, sufficed to check a tendency which had begun to show itself among the swaggerers of Deyr Amûn to treat the Englishwoman as fair game, and be familiar in behaviour both to her and to Jemîleh.

The young sheykh came alone to call on Elsie.

"You're right," he told her. "My friends are fery

damned disgustin' fellows. I nefer thought of them like that before."

"You must not use such dreadful language!" she entreated.

"Why, what's up? That's how the missionaries taught me in the English college."

"No, no! I'm sure they didn't."

"Well, maybe it were the other scholars that inform me of it. You teach me to talk brober. I luf you, miss, and I do all I can on mortal earth to blease you."

He settled himself comfortably on the wide divan.

Elsie saw in him a subject for reform. It was, besides, a great relief to her to talk in English. Though she studied Arabic her stock of words was limited, and apt to vanish from her memory at times of need. Her progress in the language was impeded by the wish of everybody to learn English from her. Jemîleh's brother had begun to babble English phrases, and even Abu Fâris, when she greeted him in Arabic, would answer "Gûd-a-day!" or "Haû-dî-dû!"

On her first Sunday at Deyr Amûn Elsie read the morning and evening service in her own room with Jemîleh; but before the second Sunday came Jemîleh told her, "Some of the beeble wish to come and bray," and suggested that it would be nice to "haf a hymn or two."

There was an old and sadly out-of-tune piano in the house, part of the furniture which the proprietor

had bought and placed there. It ended in old Abu Fâris and his family, even to his eldest brother's youngest grandchild, filing bare-foot into the big entrance-hall, whither the piano had been brought in readiness, and standing waiting as men wait for doles of food. Arabic prayer-books and hymn-books, of which Elsie had laid in a store, were handed round, Jemîleh finding the right place for every one, and giving full directions in a bullying tone. Then Elsie read the English service, in the intervals of which two hymns were sung.

Elsie went to the piano and banged out the air, no easy task since half the notes were dumb. She and Jemîleh sang, the latter very loud and stridently, while the congregation gave forth curious whining noises much like the tribute which hounds pay to human song.

"You'll say a few words, dear Miss Elsie, won't you, please?" whispered Jemîleh, who was much excited, keeping a bright eye on the flock. Once she had cursed her father when the old man had a sneezing-fit—a misfortune which provoked an altercation, Jemîleh calling it irreverence, while Abu Fâris swore that there was pepper in the prayer-book, in which, being unable to read, he had buried his nose. Once she had snatched a cigarette from one of her cousins only just in time to stop his lighting it. She had a sense of high position and authority.

Elsie was coaxed to give a short address, which

Jemîleh then translated in loud nasal tones. Another hymn was sung and they trooped out.

The performance was repeated in the afternoon, when the Sheykh Bakîr, calling at his accustomed hour, took part in it. He was presented with a prayer-book, and he held it open in his hand, but never for a moment did he take his eyes off Elsie. He smiled encouragement and nodded when he caught her eye, and sang the hymns in a remarkable falsetto voice.

When Elsie gave her little sermon he was all attention, and, at the end, when speech was lawful, he went up to her, exclaiming—

“Bravo, miss. You sbeak fery nice. And blay the piano too. By Jingo!”

“I wish that I could make these poor people see the folly of their superstitious practices and serve the Lord in spirit and in truth,” said Elsie gravely.

“By Jingo, we do everything you wish,” said Sheykh Bakîr, who had that morning, while he dressed himself, remembered “Jingo” with a thrill of satisfaction as a saint of power among the Protestants. “You are so clefer and so brafe. We nefer breach and bray and sing like that. When we think of God we fall down flat, we slab our face—daren’t say a word, by Jingo. But you, you’re not afraid to make a noise. You haf a jolly good song, you read this bit and that out of the book, you kneel and stand and sit, amusin’ of yourselfs.”

“Oh, please, you musn’t talk like that! You quite

mistake us," pleaded Elsie, earnest to the verge of tears. She entered on a lengthy explanation, detaining the young man beyond his usual moment of departure. The sun had set before he took his leave; the mountains were ash-grey with inky shadows. As he rode homeward with Abdullah Shukri he swore by Allah that she was an angel; having in truth been much affected by her simple pleading and child-like ardour in a foolish faith.

XII

DOWN came the rain, cutting off communication with the outer world. It fell not like separate arrows, as in England, but in sheets, one sheet so close behind another that objects at a little distance were invisible. The rustle of it was incessant and monotonous; the ground steamed. It went on raining for four days and nights.

At first Miss Wilding felt exhilarated; the change from cloudless skies, fierce sunlight and parched earth was welcome; the air which came in through an opened window, smelling of wet earth and leaves, refreshed her. But after forty-eight hours of that relentless deluge she repined. The rain was not like English rain. It could not be defied. The terrace was a lake. From all sides came the thunder of the mountain burns. It was a hardship to run over to the stables, whither she made a point of going every day to see the horses fed. Old Abu Fâris, covered with a monstrous sack striped black and white, arrived at the house in a state of exhaustion, after a walk of less than half-a-mile. With groans he told how he had had to ford a raging torrent which was not composed of water only, but also of rocks, bushes and the roots of trees. Elsie, touched

by his devotion in coming through such dangers, allowed him extra wages while the rain endured. The tea gave out, the sugar also. The muleteer, who went into the city twice a week, had taken down an order for those necessities on the very day the rain began, and could not well return till it was over. The loneliness and the confinement got upon Miss Wilding's nerves. She longed to go and walk about the village, exploring various objects she had seen from her terrace; though while the sunshine lasted they had not attracted her, and she had never thought of going out except on horseback. She began now to regret what she had then disliked—the trespassers upon her land, the frequent callers. Shut up with Jemîleh, she began to notice faults in the dark girl's behaviour, small tricks of manner which appeared intolerable. Jemîleh being in like manner irritable, they had been more than once upon the verge of quarrelling, when they awoke one morning to resplendent sunshine and the song of birds. Elsie flung her bedroom window open wide. There were trespassers upon the terrace, but she did not care. Abu Fâris, seated upon the steps leading up to the front door, was holding a small court of villagers, both men and women, who were on their way to work presumably, since they carried implements of agriculture, but did not seem in any hurry to begin. They were still in the same place when Elsie, having breakfasted, went out to smell the air. She walked to the far corner of the terrace, beneath the clump

of umbrella pines and, leaning on the wall, looked down into a little glen. A torrent was now tumbling down the stony bed which had been used through all the summer as a footpath. Even now some one was coming up that way, picking his foothold on the narrow margin of dry stones. It was the Sheykh Bakîr. She waved her hand to him. He caught the signal and replied by gestures, which announced that he was on his way to visit her.

The land which had so lately been dried up was fresh and green. The sunlight had acquired a sparkle, and the sky above was dewy bright as is the eye of youth. A bird was singing somewhere close at hand—three notes repeated at short intervals. The human noises of the village came to her upon the song of rushing waters.

Bakîr at length arrived and bowed before her.

"Where is Abdullah Shukri?" she inquired in Arabic.

"He follows with the horses. I came on before to ask if you would please to ride this morning."

"Willingly," said Elsie, and, her Arabic there failing, added in English, "it is such a splendid day. Let us go where we can have a real good gallop!"

"Right you are!" said Sheykh Bakîr.

Then Abu Fâris and the group of villagers, still on their way to work, who had been chatting with him earnestly for two whole hours, drew near and spoke to the young lord. All that Elsie gathered

of their conversation was Bakîr's repeated answer: "It is not my business. Ask the Sitt Jemîleh."

"What is it?" she inquired.

"Oh, it is nothing. They are silly fools. They only bore me," smiled the noble youth.

The little bird gave forth its three notes clearly from an apricot tree upon the terrace just below them.

"What bird is that?" asked Elsie, pointing to it.

"It is one little bird," replied Bakîr. "You luf him, miss?"

"I like it very much. It is so cheerful."

Then the sheykh said something to a boy who squatted near. The urchin ran, returning in two minutes with a gun. The Sheykh Bakîr received the weapon and took aim, exclaiming "Bismillah!"

"Oh, no, no! Don't! I beg of you!" cried Elsie, horror-stricken.

"No fright, my dear; I will not hurt you," said the sheykh, whose language was at times familiar, though his manner never failed of most profound respect.

He fired. The crowd applauded. The boy jumped down on to the lower terrace, and before Elsie had quite realized the tragedy, the corpse of a small greenish bird was being handed to her reverently. "You luf him? Here he is! Fery good eatin'."

"Oh, no!" said Elsie. "You are wicked! I won't have it."

Bakîr stared blankly, and his look of stupefaction was reflected on the face of every bystander.

"You don't luf him? Fery good. Then there he goes!" The sportsman gave the little corpse a jerk which sent it flying out over the wall.

For Elsie, who detested wantonness, the day was spoilt. She said that she had changed her mind about the ride. Bakîr gave a despairing shrug and moaned: "I made you angry. Don't know why. One damn small bird!"

"Why did you kill it?"

"'Cos you say you luf him."

"I liked to see it alive. I liked to hear it sing and see it hop from twig to twig. It was a lovely thing. And then you killed it and made it something sad and ugly which could never give me pleasure any more."

"Awf'ly sorry!" said Bakîr. "I tell you what. I send men, catch you sefral birds—a hundred—all alife. We but 'em in a cage and then you luf them."

"How would you like to be kept in a cage?" was the irate reply, which seemed so strange to the young nobleman that he referred it to the fellâhîn, who gasped in wonder and suggested that the Englishwoman was possessed with devils.

Bakîr, however, took another view, remarking to Abdullah Shukri, who had come up with the horses, "Behold how gentle and benign she is, how tender of the life of all God's creatures."

"I tell you what!" He turned to Elsie earnestly.

"I'll neffer kill that beasly little bird again." Elsie was forced to smile against her will. "Well, since you're waxy, I must bunk. Good-bye. Awf'ly sorry."

Bakîr, with an obeisance, was moving off. But again he was beset by all those villagers, still on their way to work, with some request. Again he waved them off, exclaiming, "It is not my business. Ask the Sitt Jemîleh!" He jumped upon his horse and rode away.

Elsie returned indoors. After a little while Jemîleh came to her with troubled brow.

"The beeble fery sorry, miss, because you'f neffer been to see our village briest nor yet our church. They wish so much that you would go and see him and be friendly. He's not a bad man and they like him, and they like you too."

"I have not the least objection," said her mistress. "Is it far? We might as well go now, if you can spare the time to come with me."

Elsie was glad of something to divert her thoughts from the incident of the small bird, which had distressed her out of measure. From the window she could see the group of villagers at last departing. The dark girl, with a black mantilla on her head, white cotton gloves and a white frilly parasol, came presently to say that she was ready. Elsie, with Fâris in attendance, rode on horseback along narrow paths between stone walls of orchards, with here and there a flat-roofed house, and every few yards

running water; while Jemîleh, Abu Fâris and a few inquisitives came on behind on foot. This walking group increased before they reached the church, where the priest Antun waited to receive them, having somehow heard of their approach. Elsie disliked his face. She thought it villanous, and fancied that his jokes in Arabic, which made Jemîleh and the others chuckle, were at her expense. But he was perfectly polite in manner as he ushered her into the church, Jemîleh going with them as interpreter.

"They are fery foolish suberstitious beebles, they need teaching," the dark girl whispered as they passed the threshold.

At first, on coming in out of the great sunlight, Miss Wilding could distinguish nothing clearly. The faint stale smell of incense vexed her nostrils. It savoured of the pit, to one of her upbringing. Then, as her eyes became accustomed to the dimness, she made out the tawdry gates of the sanctuary, and here and there upon the walls an icon of the crudest sort, the face quite black amid the gilding. She longed to get back to the open air. But the priest insisted upon showing everything, the icons, vestments, sacred vessels and, greatest treasure of all, a reliquary which, Jemîleh said, contained "a little bit of the abostle James." Miss Wilding did her best to hide the horror which she really felt, glancing often towards the doorway, framing a bright picture of her own attendants squatting on the sunlit

terrace. Happening once to look up at the roof, she gave a start and cried: "Oh, what is that?" There, staring down at her with sightless eyes was a gigantic picture of an old man with a long white beard sprawling on woolly clouds. The face was out of shape as if deformed by toothache. The eyes squinted.

"That's God Almighty, miss," exclaimed Jemîleh in an awe-struck whisper.

"How horrible!" cried Elsie from the bottom of her English heart.

"Fery suberstitious beeble!" sighed Jemîleh glibly. Turning to the priest, she told him of the lady's horror. Antun gave a laugh which sounded scornful.

"Tell her it is not a photograph," he sneered. "Assure her that the likeness is not perfect. She must have low ideas of the Most High to think it could be."

Jemîleh then translated: "He says that it is not a likeness, dear Miss Elsie, but just a symbol which these beeble understand—I think you'd better gif him something—one mejîdi will be quite sufficient—for the boor."

"I don't believe the poor will ever see it," murmured Elsie, but gave it notwithstanding.

"I'm glad you'f seen our fillage briest and the church," said Jemîleh when they got home. "The beeble too are fery glad indeed. That briest Antun is not bad, and the church is not bad either, only ignorant and boor and suberstitious. If the beeble

here was rich they'd soon be better. Now, Miss Elsie, there's another thing I want to beg—"Jemîleh's voice grew more than ever wheedling—"The beeble talk about it. They haf the custom to get briests to bless their houses. This is quite a new house, it has not been blessed. They say that's fery bad and means bad luck. They say, won't you let our briest bless the house? You gif him just a little money. He'd make some silly rubbish, sbrinkle holy water and say brayers; but means no harm and all the beeble will be bleased."

From the moment when she heard that morning from the villagers upon their way to work that the house in which she lived had not been blessed, Jemîleh had been troubled in her conscience. She could not go on living in an unblest house. It is true that she had lived with the Misses Berenger for years without a qualm, but then the question of the blessing of that house had never once been raised before her conscience.

"Certainly not," said Elsie, from the height of horror. "How can you ask such a thing? We are not heathens."

Jemîleh sighed. The peril of the unblest house depressed her visibly, till she remembered that the house and Elsie were not quite inseparable.

"Wait till you go into the city for a visit," was her thought while she declared—

"Of course, we are your serfants. It is as you please."

XIII

ONE cloudy afternoon the village priest in full canonicals, with an icon borne before him in the hands of Abu Fâris, and a jar of holy water carried by the village headman, came to the Englishwoman's house and passed from room to room, sprinkling the doorposts and the thresholds, and droning incantations in a nasal voice. The servants of the house, Jemîleh and her family, crossed themselves incessantly and sighed: "Amîn." Miss Wilding was upon a visit to her aunts.

Jemîleh had provided a light meal, of which the priest partook after the ceremony, when talk ran on the lady of the house and her peculiarities.

"When she was in the church the other day," Antun informed the company with mouth half full of meat and rice, "she shrank and trembled before every icon, and when I held the blessed relic towards her she was seized with something like an ague fit. I wished to make her touch the reliquary, but she would not. Had she touched it, she would have fallen senseless on the ground and the devil of her unbelief would then have left her. As it was, when she caught sight of God the Father looking down upon her, the devil in her gave a shriek and nearly

slew her. It is a pity, for, as a girl, she is quite sweet, by Allah! The cure for her is marriage with some true believer!" The priest laughed, tossing off a glass of wine.

"The Sheykh Bakîr desires her," some one said.

Jemîleh raised her voice against such speaking. Her lady, she would have them know, was great—no less than a princess, by Allah! There was no one in the country to be called her equal. It was a shame for them to backbite her in this way, considering the blessings she conferred on Deyr Amûn.

"The blessings, if there are any, have fallen hitherto upon the house of Abu Fâris only," said the priest. "The Sitt Jemîleh promised us a hospital and a dispensary, a school and other benefits. Have we yet seen any indication that such things will be? What has she done? She has amused herself throughout the week. On Sundays she has gathered a few hypocrites and read the Scriptures to them without understanding. I put the question to the Sitt Jemîleh: When shall we see the benefits of which she spoke?"

It was the question which Jemîleh had been dreading for weeks past. What could she say? Miss Wilding did not mean to found a school or hospital, and had Jemîleh ventured to suggest it, would have scorned her.

"It is very early yet," she faltered. "Little by little, all you wish will come to pass. My lady has intelligence. She will not launch forth into great

expenses without due precaution. Nevertheless, I hope, nay, I am certain—subject to the will of Allah—that in a little while you will see reason to be more content.”

“In sh’Allah!” said the priest decidedly.

He rose to go, and all the company rose with him, uttering farewells. As they were pouring forth upon the terrace, the Sheykh Bakîr rode up, accompanied as usual by Abdullah Shukri. He stared at the procession in surprise. Jemîleh flew to him with cheeks aflame.

“The priest has blessed the house,” she told him rapidly. “I paid the fee with my own money, to content the people.”

“Against the wishes of the lady—one so good? Shame on thee, O Jemîleh! It is not well done.”

“Allah witness, I have done it only for her sake, because the people were becoming angry and I feared for her!” Jemîleh pleaded, showing infinite distress. “How could I bear to hear men threaten harm to her?”

“Why not have come to me? I could have stopped such talk.”

“Aye, in thy presence. But behind thy back? For the love of thy salvation, promise not to tell my lady.”

The Sheykh Bakîr assented with a shrug. His telling could achieve no purpose, since the house was blest.

“When does the Sitt return? I came to ask.”

"We expect her after noon to-morrow, O my lord."

Bakîr rode off. Jemîleh went into the house to smooth and re-arrange her conscience, much disordered by the day's events. She welcomed Elsie with delight upon the morrow, having missed her greatly.

"I am so glad to be at home again!" exclaimed Miss Wilding, as Jemîleh helped her to take off her riding-habit. "Now we must get to work in earnest. I have been so lazy since I came to Deyr Amûn. I have ordered some Arabic Bibles for our little congregation. We must hold more frequent meetings, and tell the people all about the Gospel faith. I am sure they have learnt nothing of it from that dreadful priest. You say he never preaches. What instruction do they ever get?"

"He tell them sometimes about things. And there's a book—a kind of catechism."

"Get me a copy of that book. You shall translate it to me. Then I shall have something to go on."

Jemîleh, terrified at the idea of an attack upon the Orthodox communion, answered—

"I wouldn't go too quick, if I was you, Miss Elsie. To gif them Bibles is all right. But don't you say too much about their silliness. The best would be to start a school or a dispensary."

"I know: to bribe them somehow! I have seen

enough of that. I shall do nothing of the kind. I want real converts."

Miss Wilding's missionary zeal, which had been languid when she set out for the city, had been inflamed again by the reception she had met there. Her aunts and every one had taken it for granted that she was living in the mountains purely for her own amusement. That the imputation was so nearly true, as she admitted in her conscience that it was, made her the more determined to disprove it. The Consul had suggested she should take to shooting, saying that there were lynxes in the neighbourhood of Deyr Amûn. Emineh Khânum, who, as a black-shrouded phantom, came to call on her one afternoon, asked questions which she found it difficult to answer, seeming to think her way of life both mad and useless. Faced with the charge of utter selfishness combined with some degree of imbecility, she recognized the call for some immediate action. She had returned to Deyr Amûn with a fixed programme, which Jemîleh, though aghast at it, was made to serve.

A meeting which she called was well attended. The Bibles were distributed, and Elsie gave her first address in Arabic, to the infinite amusement of the audience and Jemîleh's shame.

"Not bad at all," remarked Bakîr, who heard the effort. "After a year, if you go on like that, you'll sbeak all right. The beebles smile a bit, my dear; you

mustn't mind. Seems rum for them to hear you talk of God in kitchen language."

Miss Wilding, charmed with her success in getting through the speech she had prepared so carefully, received Bakîr's remark as useful criticism.

"Do please tell me of mistakes. I want to learn. I am glad to know at any rate that I was intelligible."

Thenceforward she dispensed with an interpreter. Jemîleh helped her to prepare her little sermons, and tried to put in words adapted to the subject—long words which Elsie could not even hear aright. These were invariably forgotten by the speaker, who would cling to her own small vocabulary. Such and such a thing was bad. Such and such a thing was good. They must leave the bad and come to the good. She never got beyond such simple phrases. The priest was bad, the native church was bad, saints were bad, pictures were bad, to cross yourself was bad. They must leave them all and come to Christ. The village thronged to hear the comic blasphemy, which all Jemîleh's efforts failed to mitigate. She was not surprised, one evening, when her father brought a message from the priest, commanding her at once to stop the scandal, or he (Antun) would take measures hostile to the Englishwoman. Jemîleh, after half-an-hour of anguish and despair, went and told Elsie what the priest had said.

"That shows that we are making headway," said the fair girl proudly. "He sees that we are bring-

ing in the light, and is afraid since darkness is his livelihood. Why did he come to you and not to me? So underhand! Just what one might expect!"

"You would receive him if he was to come?" inquired Jemîleh eagerly.

"Why should I not? I'm not afraid of him."

Jemîleh sent her brother Fâris to inform the priest, who came that very evening. He was quite polite, but held to his decision that the lady's comic sermons, of which he heard so much, must cease immediately. The people came to laugh. It was not good for them, nor was it fitting for the lady's dignity. Jemîleh passed on his remarks to Elsie, who looked fit to cry, for the priest's respectful firmness overawed her.

"Well, we will give up the meetings for the present, till my Arabic is better," she at last conceded. Antun thanked her and departed.

"That's good," exclaimed Jemîleh after he had gone. "I told you we were going much too quick. You speak too strong—much stronger than you know. They hear you are blaspheming, and that makes 'em laugh, knowing that you don't know what you say. The Sheykh Bakîr he said to me he wished you'd stop it."

"That's what I so dislike about you people! Why couldn't he come straight to me? And why couldn't you have told me at the time?"

"Not bad beebble," sighed Jemîleh, with a sorrowful grimace, "only afraid that you'd get cross, and

think it imbudence. If you want to know what we really think: We think you'd better start with something bobular—a little school here in this house—there's lots of room—where I could teach some children English in the mornings. I'd like to do it, it is doing good."

"If you teach them anything it should be Arabic," said Elsie, not repelling the suggestion as Jemîleh had expected her to do. "So many of them cannot read or write their language."

"Listen, Miss Elsie dear!" Jemîleh coaxed. "If they learn Arabic, what will it helb them? Who uses Arabic except the Muslims? There is no hobe for any Christian child in Arabic. But if they study English, then they go to England or America, get civilized and make much money. I teach them Arabic as well, I bromise you, though I don't know it well except the common sort. But no children would be sent if we taught only Arabic."

"I've no objection to your teaching a few children, if you like. I think it's very good of you," Miss Wilding murmured.

Jemîleh kissed her hand. "There's something more which beeble think but 'fraid to ask," she pleaded. "There's lots of illness in the fillage, and no doctor and no chemist nearer than the city. They ask you, could you not arrange for a good doctor to come here now and then and gif out medicines? It's fery hard ubon the beeble. Many die, who would get well if there was any doctor."

"How foolish you all are! Why should you fear to ask me such a simple thing as that? I'll see what can be done," said Elsie almost fiercely, her nerves still shaken from her tussle with the priest.

She wrote next day to Dr. Wilson, inquiring if it would be possible for his Society to open a dispensary at Deyr Amûn, supposing that she undertook the cost. Her letter, sent down to the city by a muleteer, was answered by the doctor in his proper person. He rode up in the afternoon and stayed for one hour only. When he had gone, Miss Wilding told Jemîleh what had been arranged. The doctor would come once a month to Deyr Amûn for a whole day. He would stay the night at her house and on the following morning would again see patients, returning to the city after luncheon. Elsie was to subscribe twenty pounds a year to the missionary society and also to provide a place where medicines could be kept and patients interviewed.

Jemîleh ran to spread the tidings through the village. This and the teaching of the children English was proper missionary work as she beheld it. Great was her triumph as she went from house to house, in black mantilla and white cotton gloves, with skirts picked delicately up between a thumb and finger in the Frankish manner, reaping the people's blessings as her due. But all success has envy in its train. There was a party hostile to her in the village. Towards the end of her long round,

she met a group of girls with pitchers on their heads, returning from the spring.

"How is thy health?" they asked in tones of deep affection, stopping to talk. Jemîleh answered sweetly, but was not deceived.

"People are wondering," said one, "what will become of thee when the Sitt marries, as she will do surely. Thou hast served her well, and she has destroyed thy value by free intercourse with men."

"The Sitt has no design to marry, I assure you," answered Jemîleh, with a scornful laugh. "And as for liberties with men—it is a foolish lie!"

"That may be, but remember, O beloved, that the licence of the Franks is not admired by children of the Arabs. The Sitt and her protection failing, thou wouldst be ashamed—a soiled and damaged creature without hope of matrimony."

Jemîleh was already tripping on with chin in air. A minute later she was in her father's house, sobbing with face buried in the wretched divan.

"That is what we fear: the Sitt will marry," grumbled her father when he heard the reason of her grief. "That is why we are so anxious to get money from her. It is only prudence, though thou and Fâris blame it as dishonesty."

"If only she would wed the Sheykh Bakîr. He loves me very much and would provide for me."

"She will not wed the Sheykh Bakîr."

"Whom, then?"

"The doctor—any Englishman! Dost think she

loves us children of the Arabs? She pets us as some men pet cats, but does not count us of the race of Adam. Get money from her while thou canst. That is the path of wisdom."

Jemîleh could not see the prospect in that simple light, her vision being coloured by emotion. She could not bear the thought of ever leaving Elsie.

XIV

IN the shade of a great carob-tree a crowd of men, women and children waited—Christians all. At a little distance a small group of five—four men and a veiled woman—also waited. One of the men lay helpless, his head upon a comrade's lap. These were Mahometans. All faced a house, of which the door stood open, showing a clean white room, with shelves along one wall, a table strewn with bandages and instruments, and four plain chairs. This was the dispensary; and it had just been opened with prayer in English by the Scottish doctor, and prayer in Arabic by the Khawâjah Yûsuf.

The party from the city had arrived some two hours after sunrise. It included a native dispenser, an English hospital nurse, and a son of the Khawâjah Yûsuf, Percy the American, who accompanied his father for the jaunt. Miss Wilding and Jemîleh welcomed them, together with the Sheykh Bakîr, the donor of the building. Most of the patients had been waiting since the day before.

The doctor, in a snow-white smock, stood in the doorway, examining the eyes of an old man who knelt before him; assisted by his native helper and the English nurse. Within the room were Elsie and

Jemîleh, the Sheykh Bakîr, and the egregious Percy, the last-named straddling on a corner of the table with his straw hat tilted at a rakish angle. Abu Fâris, with a frown of high authority, went round amid the crowd, arranging precedence. The shadow of the carob-tree, and of the neighbouring wall, where sat the group of Muslims, lay black as ink along the ground. The sky was of blue fire. Lizards basked upon the boulders, running suddenly. Butterflies danced above a little patch of corn in which grew scarlet tulips. The hum of bees was ceaseless, like the murmur of a furnace.

"Another!" cried the doctor, as his patient, with a clean white bandage round one eye, strolled grinning to rejoin the crowd beneath the tree. Old Abu Fâris called another from that crowd—a youth afflicted with a pitiable lameness. A brief examination proved that nothing could be done for him. It was a case of compound fracture, which had healed itself in awkward fashion, crippling the man for life.

"Another!" called the doctor. Again old Abu Fâris signalled to the Christian crowd. A man and woman, leading a small child between them, were coming across the space of blinding sunlight, when a cry of "Allah! Allah!" came from the prostrate Muslim. The veiled woman leaned to him and laid a hand upon his brow; the men beside him murmured words of patience.

"Who are those people?" cried the doctor in a tone of horror. "Why have they been kept waiting?"

That man should have come first; he is in greatest need."

"May it please your honour, they are Muslims," explained Abu Fâris. "I told them that this place of healing was for Christians only, but that your honour, being known for charity, might condescend to see them in the end."

The doctor had already hurried to the spot where the young Muslim lay. Presently he called for the dispenser and the nurse to join him. "We must lift him very gently. Don't touch his hip! It is a pulp. They say a rock fell on him. How he contrived to get here is a miracle—unless they carried him, which would be torture. It must be quite two miles and all uphill," murmured the doctor, bending over the young man, now quite insensible. He moaned as he was lifted up, but gave no other sign of life. They carried him into the house and placed him on the table. Miss Wilding, the Khawâjah Yûsuf, Percy and Jemîleh went out into the sunlight hurriedly, followed with more deliberation by the Sheykh Bakîr.

"Why did you not bring him to me first?" questioned the doctor sternly.

"I knew not that his case was very bad. Those people are so stupid. They say nothing," grumbled Abu Fâris.

"Thou art an imbecile! Thy imbecility has very likely killed a man."

The doctor went into the house and shut the door.

The group of Muslims, who had heard his words, sat very still. From the crowd of Christians went up an indignant murmur. A woman said to Abu Fâris as he passed: "Take courage, O my Uncle! The hakîm is mad. His words are empty. If the Muslim youth does die, it is no matter."

There were chuckles of applause.

"I guess you don't know what that woman said," breathed Percy son of Yûsuf in Miss Wilding's ear. "She reckons it's all wrong to patch up Muslims. The more of that sort die the better, that's her view. She wishes the old man had done for him right there. Nice talk to hear in one's own country, ain't it? Worse than Injuns."

He spoke with a cigarette between his lips, legs wide apart and hands thrust deeply in the trouser-pockets of his flannel suit, his hat still tilted at a rakish angle. At the conclusion of the speech he spat. Elsie, resenting his demeanour, answered coldly—

"The Christians of this country have had much to suffer."

"That's so," replied the young man, unabashed.

"The Muslims not so bad," put in the Sheykh Bakîr. "Quite easy to get on with if you treat 'em fair." He spoke contentiously, with evident dislike of Percy's neighbourhood, and, having spoken, crossed the space of sunlight to the group of Muslims and addressed them kindly. A smile broke suddenly upon their anxious faces.

The Khawâjah Yûsuf whispered to Jemîleh—

“Barsi, my son, has made much money in America. I hope that he will settle in our land. As an American citizen he could do good business here, being above the law. If we could only find a wife for him! But he is so well-educated, so refined. Your lady is extremely beautiful, and comes, as I understand, of a high family. Every one who sees her is enchanted.”

Jemîleh, at first sight of Percy, had been well-nigh suffocated by her admiration of such Frankish elegance. Now, realizing that it was her mistress whom he had in view, she trembled, and came very near to faint. The youth might be esteemed a Frank, and he was irresistible.

“Who’s he, anyway?” asked Percy of Miss Wilding, jerking his head in the direction of the Sheykh Bakîr.

“The great man of the place, the Sheykh Bakîr Feridâni.”

“You don’t say? That’s real interesting! It’s a great family—comes from way back before the Muslim conquest,” said Percy, much impressed. “He don’t appear to hate the Muslims any.”

“He thinks as I do, that as Christians we should show them kindness—try to win them over,” murmured Elsie.

“That’s so! You get there every time—right there, you do!—when all these missionaries will go

blunderin' round till Kingdom Come. I'm proud to know you, miss."

He flung away his cigarette, put his hat straight and faced her with an air of serious deference. "Now I ask you to inform me in what way you would set about winning over the Muslim element in this country which has been top dog for centuries. Would you go in for education or medical work?"

"All that is useless till you change their hearts. They are savage because they are in ignorance. Give them the Gospel first, the rest will follow."

"If they had the Gospel same as us, then, you opine that they would go ahead like steam the same as we do?"

"Can you doubt it? Does not all history go to prove that it is so?" . . .

The cunning youth had got her on her hobby, and she now talked earnestly, forgetful of her first dislike. Jemîleh watched them with a heart like lead.

The door of the dispensary was opened, and the doctor asked if there was such a thing as a horse-litter in the village. The Sheykh Bakîr at once dispatched Abdullah Shukri to fetch an ancient palanquin which had been used by his great-grandmother. This was brought and the unconscious man was placed in it, his friends surrounding him with wild gesticulations and distracted cries.

"Excuse me now, I go with them," whispered Bakîr to Elsie. "They heard the doctor say about old

Abu Fâris killing the boor feller. Rotten thing to say. They tell about it in their fillage. I go with them to see their sheykh and make all right."

The doctor went on treating patient after patient. The ceaseless hum of bees conduced to headache. Towards one o'clock Miss Wilding and Jemîleh set out luncheon on the table from a basket. Percy volunteered to help them. He observed: "Snakes! You fairly knocked me with the truth of what you said about the Muslims. I've come home with quite a pile o' money. I should like to do some good in this old country."

"I'm sure you could not undertake a nobler work," said Elsie. "But there might be danger."

"I don't know as I object to that so long as I could feel way down as I was doing good," said Percy, smiling.

"You would have to go very slowly, very tactfully."

"And that's eternal truth," he answered gravely. "I wonder now if you yourself 'd feel like helping me a bit at first—I mean, with your advice—to get to work."

"Of course I would," said Elsie cordially. "Though I'm afraid you'd find me of but little use."

"Now that's real good of you, Miss Wilding, I must say!"

Jemîleh here let fall a lot of sandwiches out of a packet which she was unfolding. The slight disturbance covered her distress. The Khawâjah

Barsi was as cunning as he was attractive. Already he had found the weak point in her dear one's armour.

But a little later, when they sat at luncheon, she knew not which to dread more, Percy or the doctor; for Miss Wilding hung upon the latter's every word. The nurse, a pious creature, started hymns while eating; and Jemîleh, as she handed round the hard-boiled eggs to the tune of "Conquering kings their titles take," observed her mistress speaking earnestly to Dr. Wilson, and, stricken speechless, overheard these words—

"May I work with you this afternoon—just help Nurse Dorothy?"

"Certainly. Only you mustn't mind if I speak sharply."

After luncheon Jemîleh was sent up to the house to fetch an apron for Miss Wilding, who, clad in it, worked all that afternoon under the nurse's orders—like a servant, as Jemîleh thought indignantly. It did not please her that her mistress, on whose dignity her own depended, should thus degrade herself before the eyes of Deyr Amûn.

Percy came and sat beside her in the shade and talked to her about Miss Wilding, whom he called a "peach," wishing to know what in the world had made her take up with the missionary business. In the end he opened out his whole design. "I am an American citizen," he told Jemîleh, "and a Brûtes-

tânt. Sons of the Arabs with these qualifications have wedded noble English maidens before now."

Pointblank he asked Jemîleh's help to win Miss Wilding, promising her a great reward upon the day of the betrothal. After proper hesitation, making his entreaties abject, she consented, glad to feel she had him in her power. As for his marrying Elsie, sooner than allow it she would kill him with her own hands, that she vowed. Sitting beside him now agreeably, she marked the Adam's apple in his throat and thrilled to think that there her hands should press until he ceased to breathe; her soul so loved him.

XV

THE year's last rain had fallen. There were no more clouds. The village with its orchards made a patch of shade upon the mountain-side at noon, a patch of verdure in the gentler light of dawn and evening. At night it shimmered with the dance of fireflies; interminable wailing songs went up from it together with the twang of lutes and beat of little drums. Jemîleh on the whole was happy, though the neighbourhood of Percy gave her some uneasiness. He, pursuing his design, had rented a small house at Deyr Amûn. His gift for hitting on the catchwords which made Elsie serious, alarmed Jemîleh. But she knew that Elsie had as yet no feeling for him personally, being attracted only by his scheme for making Muslims Christians—a scheme so mad that every native of the country would have recognized it as a joke at once.

Percy had decided that the reason why Mahometans never became Christians was the Muslim law, which punished such conversion. It was therefore necessary, in order to get converts, to assure the would-be Christians of a safe retreat. This Percy had discovered in America, where in every industry there was demand for cheaper labour. His idea

was to convert as many Muslims as he could and ship them over to America to certain firms, under contract to work for the said firms for, say, five years at a wage which would appear to them magnificent while the Americans would think it ludicrously small. The mission would soon pay its way, he reckoned. In the village this idea of selling Muslim men for slaves was welcomed as a clever satire on the Franks, who always mix up commerce with religion. Jemîleh also viewed it in that light. But Elsie, being herself unpractical, was much impressed by Percy's manner of the business man.

"I do not know that I yet quite approve of Mr. Salaman's idea, but it seems as if it might be feasible when we have talked it into shape," she told Jemîleh.

This while Mr. Salaman (for Percy) himself was so little serious in that idea that when he broached the subject in Jemîleh's presence he threw her something very like a wink.

"It is so easy to say that any one is insincere. It has been said of every missionary and reformer since the world began," was Elsie's answer to the Sheykh Bakîr, who tried to warn her.

Jemîleh watched and waited patiently with prayer to God for the discomfiture of Percy, in which event she stood there ready to console him. Bakîr, too, learnt to hold his tongue upon the subject.

Things were at this pass when Elsie received a letter from her brother, stating his will to spend

a month with her on his way home from India. He would arrive in six weeks from the date of writing. Elsie, glancing at the first page of the letter, cried—

“He may have landed! And he is going to my aunts and they know nothing of all this! I must ride down to-morrow morning and prepare their minds. Jemîleh, you come too. The change will do you good. You haven’t left this place since first we came here.”

It was midnight before either of them went to bed that night; yet they were up and out by five o’clock next morning, and in the city by the fourth hour of the day.

Abbâs ran out into the street to meet them. Smiling, he whispered in Jemîleh’s ear. The latter told Miss Wilding: “He says your brother’s come. He’s staying at the hotel with his friend.”

“He said nothing about a friend in his letter. This is most mysterious,” said Elsie, entering the house.

Miss Sophy met her in the courtyard, crying, “He came yesterday. Such a surprise! Abbâs said that ‘a great one’ wished to see us. We were wondering whoever it could be when in walked the young man and said, ‘I’m Jack.’ He is delightful. We should have liked him to stay here, but it is difficult.”

“Who is this friend of his?”

“A Mr. Fenn. A very gentlemanlike man and

most amusing. They were at school together, so your brother tells me. They met again by chance on board the steamboat."

The Sitt Afifeh, right hand of the Misses Berenger, received Jemîleh as the right hand of Miss Wilding with all proper ceremony.

"I fear you will miss many comforts in my poor establishment," she said as she performed the honours of the bedroom. "By what I hear your house is ten times grander, and furnished in the latest fashion with all luxury. The missionaries shake their heads at the behaviour of your lady. But they are stupid people and malignant killjoys. They say that she has men to sup alone with her, but they are such accursed and malicious liars that no one can believe a word they utter. Now that your lady's brother has arrived—a military officer—such talk will die for fear of his revenge. He and his friend will stay with you at Deyr Amûn."

Jemîleh gaped upon the speaker for a moment, then replied—

"Your words astound me! On the contrary, by Allah, nothing could be more retired, more modest than the life we lead. If male visitors occasionally come to us, their visit is hedged round with ceremony like the audience of a queen. From the hour of sunset till the hour of dawn no male thing can be found within our gates. My father and my brother, armed with guns, keep watch outside."

"Well, I have told thee what the missionaries

cackle!" sighed Afîfeh, with a shrug. As they came downstairs into the yard, she caught Jemîleh's arm and whispered, "There they go!" Jemîleh saw two Frankish men conducted by Abbâs across the sunlit quadrangle. She had no difficulty in deciding which was Elsie's brother. His friend was smaller, uglier, but looked intelligent.

"May their coming bode us good!" she murmured doubtfully.

Elsie's meeting with her brother was quite unemotional—a "So there you are!" on the one side and a "Well, old girl!" upon the other.

"My friend, Dick Fenn," was introduced, and Elsie noticed that Mr. Fenn seemed quiet and of good intelligence, quite different from the remembered cohort of her brother's friends. "I don't know how you're off for room in the wilderness, but I should take it as a friendly act if you'd invite him too," said Jack.

"I don't take up much room," put in the other, smiling, "and I've got a tent which suits me better than a room."

"You'll like Fenn," Jack informed his sister in a loud aside. "He's as keen as you are about niggers and all that."

A glance of amusement, showing that he did not take Jack seriously, confirmed the good impression Mr. Fenn had made on Elsie. She really hoped that he would spend some time at Deyr Amûn.

"Aunt Sophy must come up and chaperon me," she exclaimed with glee.

"But you must not fly off at once," Miss Jane protested. "I insisted on your all staying here a week at least. It is so seldom that we see our relatives."

"I'm game," said Jack, "on one condition, which is that you and Aunt Sophia dine with us at the hotel this evening."

The two old maids were thrown into a flutter. Never, since their coming to the city, had they dined at the hotel.

"It shows what sort of a time they've had of it out here," said Jack to Elsie privately. And he stated his intention to enliven them while he was there.

Incidentally he managed to enliven the whole British colony. The week was altogether joyous, and utterly unlike the place as Elsie knew it. Her brother's knack of importing his own rather boisterous atmosphere into any company he might frequent had much annoyed her in old days; but now it made a welcome change. The missionaries, who had seemed so dull and narrow, developed unexpected geniality; the tennis-playing, which had been a solemn rite, became a real amusement under Jack's direction. That her brother should strike up a friendship with the Consul, whom Elsie still regarded as her enemy; should think it right to call upon the Turkish governor and, returning from the visit, profess admiration for the Turks, was tiresome but

only to be expected from her knowledge of him. Jack's jokes about her missionary efforts she endured, and only once did he attempt a serious talk with her upon that subject.

"I say, old girl," he said one early morning, as they were returning from a ride together through the gardens, "you mustn't really think of settling down out here. It's all right for a time—good fun, I know. But in the end you'll either turn into an amiable fossil like the dear old aunts, or go quite mad. There's nothing here to do."

"When you come to Deyr Amûn, you'll see that I find much to do," said Elsie, holding herself in.

"Missionizing—eh?" said Jack with a despairing laugh. "The dear old Pasha fairly chuckled when I talked about it—said something that I can't remember, but it was devilish good. I've been five years in India and I can tell you I don't love the native Christian. If he's changed his religion it's for what he can get."

"That just shows," his sister cried, "how much you know about it. The native Christians here are not converted from Mahometanism, but the descendants of those who at the Mahometan conquest refused to change their faith."

"That shows that the Mahometans were jolly decent, since they let them live. They must have always been an awful nuisance."

"They have persecuted them atrociously for centuries!"

"Impossible, old girl! The last one would have cleared out long ago. They're still alive and seem to me to boss the blessed country. . . . But if they're decent Christians, why convert them?"

"I shall not argue with you!"

"You talk to Fenn! He knows a lot about it."

"I fancy Mr. Fenn would quite agree with me."

"If he does I'll eat my hat!" Jack laughed derisively. He was obliged to hold his peace, for they were entering a crowded market where all their wits were needed to avoid collisions. Parting from her at the door of their aunt's house, he cried, for the last word—

"Well, you know what I think. This missionary business is all humbug. You're simply fooling round and wasting money on a lot of rascals who are certain to make game of you behind your back."

These words, loudly uttered, reached the hearing of Jemîleh, who happened to be sitting in the court. They gave her quite a new respect for Mr. Jack's intelligence.

XVI

THE glow of early morning had just come to Deyr Amûn, though for two hours it had warmed the heights beyond the wady. Jemîleh, with a crimson shawl over her head, stood on the terrace underneath the umbrella pines, watching a cavalcade go down the terrace. It was an excursion organized by Sheykh Bakîr for the amusement of the Englishmen. They were going to a place where rumour said that there were leopards. Miss Wilding, at the sheykh's request, was of the party, and the infatuated Percy could not be kept out. The last named wore the neatest of white riding breeches, white coat and waistcoat, blue shirt, black tie, the brightest of black riding boots and white kid gloves for the occasion, the whole surmounted by a brand-new panama. Jemîleh had never in her life before beheld such elegance. Yet at starting, Mr. Jack had laughed at its possessor rudely, and now that they were halfway down the slope to the ravine, had knocked his hat off, obliging Percy to dismount. Miss Elsie, riding on in front between the Sheykh Bakîr and Mr. Fenn, did not see what had happened or she would for certain have been angry.

Jemîleh, though disgusted with the Englishman's

brutality, tasted a bitter pleasure in the sight of Percy tortured. It served him right for clinging to the Franks who did not want him, and slighting an unlucky girl of his own race who loved him.

In advance of the party rode the greatest hunter in the mountains—a Muslim from Aïneyn—with one of the Turkish soldiers attached to Sheykh Bakîr in his capacity as Mudir of the district. At the point where they were last seen from the house Miss Wilding turned and waved her handkerchief to poor Jemîleh on the terrace, who returned the signal, smiling obsequiously, as if her mistress had been near enough to see her face. But the tinkle of the bracelets on her shapely arm was like the rattle of dry bones; her eyes were full of tears, and it was with a look of utter desolation that she turned and went indoors.

The visit of the two young Englishmen, for all its noise of gaiety, dismayed her. She felt that Elsie was escaping from her, was being tempted back to England by her brother's presence. She had overheard some of the talk with which the shrewd and forcible Khawâjah Jack regaled Miss Wilding when they were alone together. It was all derision of the people of the country. The Khawâjah Fenn, his friend, was still more terrible. If he never spoke against the children of the Arabs he knew more about them, fifty times, than did Khawâjah Jack. The Khawâjah Fenn spoke Arabic like a Muslim—that is to say, much better than Jemîleh—when he

chose. He also understood the local dialect, and had made acquaintance with some people in the village who disliked Jemîleh. After watching the trio for a week with the keen eyes of a small anxious builder who saw her painfully erected fabric menaced with destruction, she felt sure that Elsie was attracted by this hateful man. That he, on his side, desired Elsie was self-evident. How could he help but long for one so appetizing, being thrown with her for days together in such intimacy? Jemîleh felt deserted in a double sense, as she moved languidly about her duties in the empty house, with only Miss Sophia Berenger to wait upon.

Her thoughts returned to Percy with compassion. Like her, he was despised, derided of the Franks. Why—why did he submit to their indignities, being a man of wealth and perfect independence? Why could he not turn with love towards one who asked but leave to be his slave for life? By the time the cavalcade returned, soon after sunset, she had resolved to speak to Percy on this subject guardedly. She hurried out to greet the party, smiling brightly.

“We’ve had a ripping time!” called out Khawâjah Jack. “Though Percy-boy had a bad fright—didn’t you, Percy?”

There was a laugh, in which his victim tried in vain to join. Elsie exclaimed—

“It is too bad! I will not have Mr. Salaman tormented any longer.”

“He ran—like a steam-engine, he ran!” cried

Sheykh Bakîr; while Abdullah Shukri, understanding from the laughter what the subject of discussion was, added in Arabic, "He ran, by Allah!"

From disconnected words Jemîleh learnt the nature of the joke which had been played on Percy. While he was stalking a small bird among the rocks, crawling on his stomach cautiously, with gun in hand, the Englishmen had raised the shout: "Look out! There is a leopard close behind you."

"Percy had all the sport," remarked Khawâjah Fenn in his dry way, far worse to bear than the horse-laughter of unthinking Jack. "He shot a sparrow and a lizard, was it—or a mouse?"

"I guess you lively boys must have your fun. No use my talking any," observed Percy, smiling.

"They played a filthy trick," he told Jemîleh privately. "They think, because I have some nerves, that I lack fortitude, and made it so appear before the lady. Am I not better than those loud-voiced, laughing fools? I go in daily terror of assassination—for the lady's sake. My plan for the conversion of the Muslimîn is known. The government and all the infidels desire to slay me. They dare not do it openly, because I am an American. But it is dangerous for me to go abroad at night. All this I suffer. Is it fair that she should view me as a coward? When she beholds me dead—stabbed through in fifty places—for her sake—she will not laugh, perhaps."

He spoke with fury. Jemîleh shuddered at the

dreadful picture, though she knew that it was imaginary. That night she told her mistress about Percy's danger, as a matter of her private knowledge.

"I don't believe it," was Miss Wilding's answer, "any more than I believe in his intention to convert Mahometans. My aunt assures me he is quite incapable of such a thing."

Jemîleh was alarmed by this disclosure of pure scepticism where she had formerly waged war upon a blind belief. She pleaded Percy's cause as if it had been her own.

"He would not do good by himself. But you inspire him, dear Miss Elsie. He'd throw himself into the fire if you commanded. He's trying to convert those wicked beebles, although he knows that they will try to kill him."

"I don't want him to do anything for me," said Elsie highly. "I'm afraid he really does tell shocking stories. But, of course, he may be earnest in this instance. Time will show."

"He is in earnest. I am sure of it," sighed poor Jemîleh. "You are so changed in these last days. You don't believe in doing good like what you did. Mr. Jack he says the missionary business is all humbug—I have heard him—I am afraid he makes you think the same."

"Not he!" said Elsie, with a scornful laugh. "I know my brother."

The baneful influence of the two Englishmen—

whom Jemîleh in her mind beheld as wicked schemers—was apparent in each word her mistress uttered. Jemîleh mourned the dear one's lapse from high ideals. The Englishmen—undoubted Atheists—corrupted her. They led her to suppose that all the natives of the country were untrustworthy. With sorrow she warned Percy of the grievous change which the conversation of those infidels had wrought in Elsie.

“Ha! She shall see!” he cried, grinding his teeth. “By the Gospel, I am altogether reckless. I shall wander out at nights when certain death awaits me.”

Jemîleh strove in vain to calm him, saying—

“Thou art much too good for them. They cannot estimate thy height of character. Return to thy own people, to the children of the Arabs, who respect and love thee.”

“Our Lord reward thy kindness!” was his answer. “Thou art my one friend. I behold thee as an angel, nothing less, by Allah! I know that thou wouldst save me, but it is too late. The poison of that proud disdainful girl is in my veins. Strange things shall come to pass. She shall respect me. God knows I care not for my life henceforward.”

Jemîleh was distressed by his wild talk, which showed the measure of his love for Elsie. She could not think that one of his intelligence would really put himself in any danger.

But that very evening as she went with Fâris

to the village shop—a walk of near a mile—to buy some candles, she saw a sight which filled her with concern. Passing a tavern—a vine arbour on a terrace just above the road—she espied, among the men who sat there drinking, Percy in conversation with the village murderer. Above the talk and laughter, the rattle of backgammon-pieces sharp as pistol-shots, she heard him say: “To kill a man is no more than to kill a fly.” The answer of Amîn the murderer she failed to catch, but from the tone she judged it a rebuke.

Her thoughts were hornets as she hurried on her way. Could Percy, maddened by ill-usage, be intending to assassinate his rival, the Khawâjah Fenn? She put the question to her brother, who had seen what she had.

“No,” said Fâris, “he has not the manhood. His talking with Amîn is chance or mere bravado.”

Jemîleh felt that he was right. Percy had not the stupidity (or as Fâris, himself stupid, called it “manhood”) to contemplate so great a crime. But there remained the shame of his appearance in such company, degrading her ideal of perfect elegance. From a child she had been taught to shun Amîn the murderer, while always treating him with great politeness. He was a good Christian, that was known; the priest supported him. But the odium of one who counted human life as that of sheep, killing a man, a woman, or a child to order coolly in the way of business, adhered to him in spite of his

religious orthodoxy. It was impossible that Percy should not know his character, since everybody in the village called him Murderer. He must be desperate indeed. Her heart was troubled for him.

But on the morrow and succeeding days Percy came up to Miss Wilding's house as usual, bearing the insults of the Englishmen with his accustomed patience. Jemîleh laid aside misgiving upon his account, and had begun to harbour some contempt for his mean spirit, when the end came suddenly.

One afternoon while the sun's heat was still extreme the Englishmen must needs play a fatiguing game with bat and ball, which turned, as all their games were wont to do, to teasing Percy. Jemîleh saw their victim growing hot and weary. They mocked him cruelly and flung the ball at him. It sometimes hit his face; yet still he smiled agreeably.

"It is a shame!" exclaimed Jemîleh, who sat at Elsie's feet beneath the pine-trees, watching. "We ought not to be sitting here, Miss Elsie—you, a missionary lady—watching that rude game." Jemîleh seized the fair girl's hand and pleaded: "Blease to stob them! He is a good man, only so bolite. He does not understand their jokes, he tries to blease them."

"He is playing for his own amusement, I suppose," was the cold answer.

"I must say he is most good-natured," said Miss Sophy at her crochetwork.

Even Jemîleh was obliged to laugh when Percy,

trying hard to hit the ball, swung round, and tumbled forward on the bat while the ball, at the same moment, flying from the deft hand of the Khawâjah Jack, attained the stretched-out seat of his white trousers. Shouts of joy went up from a small crowd of village urchins who hung upon the terrace wall to watch the fun.

Jemîleh went indoors to fetch refreshments. When she came out again, she found her mistress talking kindly to the victim.

"I am sorry," she was saying. "But of course your people wish to see you. They must feel quite neglected. You have been so much at Deyr Amûn."

"What's this, Percy-boy? Why, you're never going to leave us?" cried Jack heartily. "Fenn, Fenn! Do you hear that? Percy's going. I'm quite sorry."

"And I'm real sorry too," said Percy with emotion. "It's been bully foolin' round with you bright boys. But I've got work to do. I guess I must quit foolin' here and now and say 'Good-bye.'"

When he could escape from the farewells of the Khawâjah Jack, he added for the ear of Elsie only—

"You'll maybe recollect those words of yours which put me on to this same work. I think about those words. They kind o' burn me. You'll have forgotten, I daresay, but I shall remember those same words o' yours till Judgment Day."

So saying, he strode off with dignity. Jemîleh guessed that he was mad with hidden rage.

"What serious work can such a fellow have to do?" asked Fenn, incredulous.

"It is missionary work," Jemîleh answered gravely.

"Our Percy-boy! Great Snakes!" cried the Khawâjah Jack. He was going to say more, but Elsie's face forbade him. She nodded towards their aunt, who was in hearing.

"He may be more in earnest than I thought at one time," murmured Elsie.

"Percy earnest? I protest!" sneered the Khawâjah Fenn. Jemîleh ran indoors to cry unseen.

XVII

THE house of Amîn the murderer stood near to that which, with a cave for stable, Percy Salaman had rented for the summer months. Reclining in the shade of a pomegranate bush, the only shelter which his garden offered, the American exchanged remarks with Amîn and his wife, who came and went upon their housetop just below. His servant borrowed household necessities from these neighbours, and an alliance thus sprang up between the houses highly gratifying to the social spirit of Amîn.

This man's portion in the world had been a very hard one. At the age of seventeen he had struck down a man in anger and the man had died. By favour of the father of the Sheykh Bakîr, who, pitying his youth, paid up the blood-money, he went unpunished for that first offence; and the fact that he had felt no fear nor any pangs of nausea after the killing gained him a name for courage and ferocity, which he strove to justify.

Two years later he had killed a Muslim, who was resting by the wayside and happened to insult him at his work in the fields. On this occasion he experienced both fear and nausea; but fear predominated, for the government was moved, and the Mus-

lins of the neighbourhood called loud for vengeance. His conscience, too, was troubled with a sickening dread lest by so bad a killing he had forfeited salvation. He had hurried to the priest, who reassured him on this point, but laid it as a charge upon him that he should not thenceforth slay in wantonness or anger, but only for the honour of the Orthodox community. On that condition Antun gave him absolution, and, further, laid his case before the Patriarch, who used his privileged position with the Turkish government to reduce his sentence to a year's imprisonment.

Amîn had been profoundly grateful at the time, but in after years he sometimes wished that he had never sought protection of the Church. For whatever any prior, bishop or arch-priest commanded he was forced to do; and they occasionally ordered deeds which made him vomit, and robbed him of his rest for nights together. Besides, those holy men paid badly, if they paid at all; obliging him, for his living, to take private orders, which defiled his soul, and drove him to the priest once more, to deeper bondage. The sense of grievance which his plight engendered was plainly legible upon his handsome face, and in the listless droop of his broad shoulders. He dealt in moral sentiments, deplored all violence, and sorrowed for the evil that is in the world.

When Percy Salaman, a man of education and refinement, betrayed a liking for his company he was enraptured; and did his utmost by politeness

to mitigate the bad impression of his name. He thought at last that he had found a man in whose society he might forget his ignominy for a while. But after a few days he told his wife—

“God help me, I cannot escape from evil talk. Even this Amerikâni speaks of bloodshed, and wishes me to tell him of my evil deeds. A man who never in his lifetime killed a fly, he fails to realize the horror of the things he says.”

But the companionship of the American remained desirable, since it exalted him in the opinion of the villagers; and, having something of a workman's pride in his profession, he did not always, in reply to Percy's questions, repel what he considered an unhealthy curiosity.

When Percy came to him one afternoon and, after compliments, inquired if it were possible to deal a man what should appear to every one to be a serious wound, without the slightest danger to his life, he answered readily—

“As to danger to his life, Yes; but as to the subsequent health of the individual one cannot foretell with certainty. All would depend on the condition of his body at the moment when the wound was dealt. If he were a healthy man, the wound would heal with very little damage to his constitution.”

He then proceeded to explain the relative position of the vital organs in the human body, using Percy's silken shirt-front as a chart.

"Come into my house," said Percy, trembling with emotion. "There we can talk more privately."

It was the day of his revolt against his persecutors. His farewell words to Elsie burnt his brain. He saw himself a much-wronged man, a most pathetic object, and wished to make Miss Wilding so behold him. He pictured himself dead at her feet—not dead, that is, but dying, able still to hear her words of sorrow, her passion of too-late repentance for her treatment of him while he lived. On the walk back to his house, the blazing sun had seemed like darkness, the mountain landscape was a queer mirage which came and went. They thought he was a coward. They thought his talk of danger foolish nonsense. They should see.

Having brought the murderer into his house, installed him comfortably on the divan, and placed a box of cigarettes close to his hand, he put the simple question—

"Can you deal me such a wound as that we spoke of—serious to all appearance, but not mortal?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed the murderer with horror. "Your honour does but jest with me, please God!"

"Nay, I am in earnest. In the name of Allah, do me this great service. It is most important."

"Not for all the wealth of all America!" declared Amîn. "Thou hast been kind to me. The Lord forbid that I should shed thy honoured blood. By Allah, no! I count thee as my friend."

"But I desire it! It is the best service that a friend could do me. Listen only," pleaded Percy, with the greater eagerness because he now began to think the deed impossible. He told Amîn the story of his wooing of the Englishwoman, of the insults he had suffered in her presence at a rival's hands, of the doubt that had been thrown upon his courage and veracity.

"In thy place I should wound my rival, not myself," remarked Amîn. "My aim would be to carry off the girl."

"How can I? They are English and protected. I know the lady. She would hate me more than ever. Do as I ask thee, for our Saviour's love!"

"But thou art an American. Never yet have I attacked a foreign subject. It is much too dangerous."

"But since thou doest it at my command, what ails thee? It is between ourselves, and I shall hold thee guiltless. Be kind, O my beloved! I will pay thee well."

"How much?" inquired Amîn, still very dubious.

It happened at that moment that remembrance of his griefs surged up in Percy's spirit overwhelmingly. In the anguish of self-pity he cried, "Fifty pounds!"

"I say not No. Let me consider of the matter," sighed Amîn, minded to lay the case before the priest, who kept his conscience, before deciding to accept the handsome offer. No serious damage need

be done to the American. A few flesh wounds were all that he required. But the idea of shedding a friend's blood displeased him. It seemed as if it might be sinful; but the priest would know.

"It must be done this very night," cried Percy fiercely. "I cannot live despised another day. They think I am a liar. They must know that I spoke truth."

Now Antun, as the murderer well knew, had gone that morning to the city and would not return till night. There was thus no hope of seeing him before the deed. Well, fifty pounds was a great sum, the possession of which would free a man for ever from the need to kill, allowing him to go and settle in some other village, buy a coffee-shop, and lead the quiet life his soul desired.

"Where is the money?" he inquired at length.

"I have here twenty pounds which I brought hither for my rent. The rest I will give order to be paid to thee."

Percy went and fetched the money, which Amîn accepted with the utmost reverence. Having stowed it in the bosom of his robe, he said respectfully, "Now be so good as to undo thy shirt in front. I wish to see the ground where I must work, to avoid accidents."

While the murderer was prodding at his chest and ribs, the patient smoked a cigarette with careless mien.

"Now by my life, thou art a lion!" cried Amîn

admiringly. "Forgive me, O my lord, if I confess that I had judged thee something of a craven. The highly educated and refined are often so. But education has not robbed thee of thy manhood. By Allah, I myself should shudder at the thought of being wounded without anger."

Such praise from one whose trade was bravery excited Percy, and the vision of himself as a great hero prevented him from thinking of the operation. He knew that it was better not to think of that. He could not eat the supper which his servant brought to him, but drank a quantity of wine and smoked continuously. His servant went to rest. The house was still. The only sound that reached him from without was the distant howling of a jackal on the mountain-side. At last there came the soft knock at the door.

Amîn had brought a lantern with him. "Come!" he said.

Percy assumed his straw hat with the garish ribbon, and his gold-mounted cane. His heart beat in his head, as he went down the terraces, following in the footsteps of the murderer, who held the light. The night was very still and dark beneath the stars. It seemed to Percy that the whole world held its breath until a certain moment which was fast approaching.

"Where dost thou wish that I should do the work upon thee, O my dear lord?" inquired Amîn with

reverence. "Near the lady's house, thy word was. Is this near enough?"

Percy gasped assent. He wished to say that there was no immediate hurry, that they might sit down together for a minute and discuss the matter. But his tongue was heavy.

"I shall not wound thee deeply. Have no fear!" Amîn assured him. "The pain will not be half so bad as toothache, thou wilt see. I would earn the wealth thou givest me. Stand very still."

Amîn held up the lantern, looking hard at Percy's ribs. In his hand was a long knife, which gleamed a little. The victim tried to pray, but every word of prayer escaped his memory.

"Good! That is perfect," said Amîn. "Continue so!"

But at the first plunge of the steel in his expectant flesh, Percy became himself again. His tongue was loosed. He struggled furiously with Amîn. He clutched the knife. It cut his fingers to the bone. He gave a yell. The murderer let fall the lantern and pressed a hand upon his mouth, crying: "Be silent! Wouldst alarm the neighbourhood? Keep still, I tell thee. I must earn the money."

For answer Percy bit the hand which stopped his mouth.

A sudden anger took possession of Amîn. The American had tempted him to do the deed against his conscience, yet now cried out for help. He scented treachery. "Take that, and that, and that,

O son of evil!" he exclaimed, slashing at his assailant till the latter fainted. The lantern had gone out. Amîn relighted it. He stood and looked down at his work. Again the wave of anger rocked his brain, impelling him to make an end of such a craven wretch. He prayed to Heaven, and it passed without harm done, leaving him penitent. He bent over the body and examined it. As far as he could judge there was no deadly wound.

Remembering the twenty pounds he had received, he carried Percy in his arms from the secluded olive-grove where he had done the work, up a rough path, on to the terrace of the Englishwoman's house, leaving behind his lantern. He gave a call for help, then vaulted the low wall, retrieved his lantern, and went home in great distress of mind.

XVIII

JEMÎLEH was awakened by the thud of earth thrown up against her window. "Come down!" cried Fâris in a mighty whisper. "Here is Barsi, dying. I smelt a trick at first, but he bleeds truly, for my hands are wet." Jemîleh, in a frenzy of alarm, slipped on a dress and ran to wake her mistress. In a minute the whole household was astir. The Khawâjah Jack and the Khawâjah Fenn, a cousin of Jemîleh, and her aunt who did the housework, Miss Sophy Berenger and Elsie flew downstairs in hurried clothing. The lifeless form of Percy Salaman was lifted up by the two Englishmen more gently than Jemîleh would have thought it possible for such rough beings to have handled anything.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Khawâjah Jack, with real emotion. "Our Percy-boy, who wouldn't hurt a flea! What a d—d shame! Who did it, do you think?"

"I think the Muslims did it. He was trying to confert them. They are such fanatical bad beeble," said Jemîleh, weeping.

"Oh, rubbish!" returned Jack, incredulous.

"No Moslem living would take Percy seriously! More likely he'd been fooling with some girl."

"No, sir," replied Jemîleh, with some bitterness. "You neffer understood. He was an earnest Christian."

She used the past tense naturally, so complete was her impression of a great catastrophe.

The wounded man was placed in Jack's own bed, his wounds were washed and bandaged. They were many and had caused much loss of blood. None present knew enough about such matters to be sure that he was not upon the point of death.

After all that any one could think of had been done, Jemîleh, weeping at her bedroom window, watched the dawn steal up the wady from the distant plain.

By good fortune it was Dr. Wilson's day to visit Deyr Amûn. Fâris was sent off on horseback towards Aïneyn with orders to bring him to Miss Wilding's house without delay. He arrived about the third hour of the day, and with him Percy's father, the Khawâjah Yûsuf, the latter in a transport of alarm. The doctor, after brief examination of the wounds, was of opinion that they could be healed in a few days. Percy, by that time conscious, heard the verdict and emitted a sepulchral groan, closing his eyes. That groan revived suspicion in Jemîleh. She asked the doctor, who was reassuring Elsie: "Sir, would it be bossible for Mr. Bercy to haf made those wounds himself?"

"No," said the doctor, after brief reflection, "it would not."

"Jemîleh! How absurd you are!" cried Elsie. "Do you imagine he attempted suicide?"

Jemîleh held her tongue, but thought the more. Returning to the sickroom after all the English had gone down to the dispensary, she received a smile from Percy, with the words—

"Well, here I am at last! The Sitt leans over me. Her brother and that rascal now feel shame. By Allah, it is worth the fear of death, the bitter anguish."

"Who did it?" asked Jemîleh softly, as she smoothed his pillow.

"A Muslim who had knowledge of my mission," answered Percy, with a grin. He would not tell her more than that. There was a mystery.

Five minutes later she was out of doors and tripping daintily toward the village, wearing her black mantilla and white cotton gloves, and carrying her parasol. Her first thought was to call upon Amîn the murderer, but courage failed her, since he might be rude. The priest knew all that happened in the village, and he had always been polite to her. Accordingly, she struck into a path which led by many terraces up to the platform by the church, where Antun lived in a small flat-roofed house.

His wife was sitting in the doorway grinding corn in a small hand-mill, a horde of children playing in the gloom behind her.

"Our father is in church," she told Jemîleh, pausing in her work of grinding to push the hair out of

her eyes. "Be kind, come in and take refreshment."

Jemîleh thanked her, but went on into the church. At first she could distinguish nothing in the gloom except the flicker of a votive-candle near the sanctuary gates. From without she had imagined she heard voices, but when she entered all was silent.

The voice of Antun close beside her made her jump.

"What is thy errand, O my daughter?"

"I have need of counsel."

The priest said to some other person: "Go outside and wait." There was a noise of slip-shod feet departing, the doorway was obscured a moment and then all was still.

"Speak, O my daughter!" said the priest benignly, and Jemîleh told her story plainly, having well prepared it.

"Barsi pretends that the Muslimîn attacked him because of that mad plan of his for their conversion," she concluded. "It cannot be, and yet the wounds are real. Help me to solve the riddle, O my father."

"What part have I in the affairs of heretics?" said Antun, with a deprecating laugh.

"I have a gift here in my hand for thee. Be kind, assist me!"

For answer, the priest shouted: "O Amîn!" and Jemîleh realized that the man who had been with him when she entered was the murderer.

"Tell this lady all that thou hast told to me," said Antun sternly.

"Is it the Englishwoman?" asked Amîn, with tearful voice.

"No, it is the Sitt Jemîleh. Have no fear. Thy story will be secret from the multitude."

"By the Lord, I care not though the whole world know it. All I care for is the pardon which thou still withholdest wrongfully."

"Well, tell thy story. After that I will absolve thee."

The murderer then heaved a sigh and spoke as follows—

"I am a poor man, O my lady, and from my youth up had no fear, so that men employed me to do works requiring courage——"

"Shorten thy prologue, O old lion," said the priest. "The lady cannot wait to hear the tale of all thy life."

"About a month ago there came to the house next door to mine a son of the Arabs who had studied in America, by name Barsi, son of Yûsuf——"

"All that too is known. Eschew it!" said the priest.

Amîn groaned.

"Yesterday, about the fourth hour after noon, my neighbour the Khawâjah Barsi, the American afore-said, came to my house and asked if I could wound a man in such a way that he would seem to others at the point of death, yet run no danger. I an-

swered: 'Yes.' I showed him how the business could be done. I will explain the process to you, O my lady. It all depends on the position of the heart and liver. When those are ascertained——"

"Eschew that also!" cried the priest.

"Curse thy father!" was the piteous answer. "Let me be! . . . Well, this man, my neighbour—the aforesaid Barsi son of Yûsuf, it is understood—desired me to inflict that wound upon his proper person. Allah witness how I struggled to dissuade him. It seems that he desires the Englishwoman and hit upon this plan to gain her heart through pity. He gave me ten pounds Turk—a fortune for a man like me! Accordingly, last night, when all the village slept, I took a lantern and my knife and went and fetched him from his dwelling, which, as I have said already, O my lady, is next door to mine. I took him to the field beneath the Englishwoman's house, and there began the operation he required of me. But he would not keep still. He struggled like a madman and insulted me with evil words, though all I did was in obedience to his own command; till anger overcame me and I dosed him well with flesh-wounds. Then, as he lay insensible upon the ground, I thought upon his treason, and an angry devil entered into me, impelling me to pierce his sinful heart. I shut my eyes and prayed to our good Lord St. George, and presently, by Allah's grace, that devil left me. I carried him to the meydân before the Englishwoman's house; I

shouted to awaken Fâris—who, as thou knowest, O my lady, always sleeps before the door—and then returned to my own place. I could not sleep for thinking of the crime to which the devil of my anger had incited me; the evil purpose I had harboured for a moment. Man's nature is perverse and sinful, O my lady! On that account I sought the presence of our father, to offer up a tithe of what that traitor gave me. Yet he withholds his absolution, O my lady. Is that fair?"

"My duty is to ascertain thy true repentance," laughed the priest.

Turning to the girl he asked, "Well, art thou satisfied?"

"By Allah, yes! The Lord reward thee, O our father!"

Jemîleh made her present and departed. Tripping homeward underneath her parasol, she smiled to think of her command of Percy.

At a turn of the path she saw Abdullah Shukri sitting with the headman of the village in the latter's orchard.

"What is this we hear of the Amerikâni?" cried Abdullah. "Is he quite killed?"

"Not killed, but gravely wounded," sighed Jemîleh.

"By Allah, I, too, would be gravely wounded, and with rapture, for the luxury of being tended by the Sitt Jemîleh," shouted the servant of the Sheykh Bakîr gallantly.

“And I, too, old as I am!” the headman chuckled.

Jemîleh tossed her head at them and tripped away. In a flash she had perceived what would be said in Deyr Amûn; that she had shown favour to the Amerikâni, talking alone with him beyond discretion, and that one of her relations had attacked him in defence of her good name. She laughed aloud in exultation. It seemed impossible for Percy to escape her now.

XIX

HAVING ascertained that the English were still at the dispensary, Jemîleh entered Percy's bedroom carrying a glass of milk with care for her black gown. The room was darkened by Venetian blinds, between the slats of which pushed little spokes of dusty sunbeam, laying streaks of light across the bed and floor.

Percy turned uneasily.

"Who is it?" he inquired in an expiring voice. On hearing "It is I, Jemîleh," in his native Arabic, he gave a sigh of vast relief. He begged Jemîleh for the love of Allah to bring in a barber. Black bristles stood out on his cheeks and chin. His hair was towseled. He would not have the Sitt behold him thus. It seemed he had been out of bed and at the looking-glass. Jemîleh paid no heed to his request. Adjusting the Venetian blind, she murmured—

"By Allah, I admire thy strategy! It was well planned. But why couldst thou not keep still while he was wounding thee at thy command?" Percy gave a start and then lay still as death. Jemîleh stood and looked at him awhile; then, setting down the glass of milk upon the commode, said demurely:

"You must drink this dose. It is the Sitt's command," and left him; nor did she return that day, except in company with one or other of the English ladies.

News of the attempt upon the life of Percy Salaman, carried to the city by the doctor, and there repeated with exaggerations and conjectures, had caused intense excitement in the Protestant community.

On the day after Jemîleh's visit to the priest, a troop of missionaries, male and female, rode to Deyr Amûn to make inquiries. All the men were armed.

"We have not come to be a burden on your hospitality," the Presbyterian minister said to Elsie. "We have brought our own provisions and will picnic on your terrace if you will permit it. But hearing that the Muslims of Aïneyn and Makarah had risen with intent to slaughter every soul in Deyr Amûn, and though we did not quite believe the rumour, we thought it right to come and see how you were placed. Miss Berenger is very anxious. She wishes you and Miss Sophia to return with us to-night."

"But all is quiet here, as you perceive," said Elsie, laughing. "Mr. Salaman was attacked the night before last and badly wounded—he declares by Muslims, but Mr. Fenn and my brother think it much more likely that there is some private scandal which he hides from us."

"I will interrogate him," said the minister ju-

dicially. "There may, I think, be truth in what he says. His father, a most earnest man, believes his story."

The Khawâjah Yûsuf was beside himself with fatherly emotions and a sense of new importance. He had spent the night at Percy's little house, and stated his intention to remain there till his son was well. In his opinion fresh attacks might be expected any minute. When informed of the reports of general massacre current in the city, he shook his head with pursed-up lips and a portentous frown. His speech was prayer to God for the protection of his chosen, mingled with threats of vengeance on the Muslim population. They should learn that they could not assail a Christian with impunity. His son was an American subject. The Americans would take the matter up and, if the Turkish government made no redress, would send a fleet and army to destroy it. He paced the terrace by the hour together, accompanied by any one who cared to listen, clasping his hands and casting up his brimming eyes to heaven.

The other missionaries sat beneath the pine-trees on the terrace.

"Where is Mr. Jones?" asked some one.

"He brays with my boor son," said the Khawâjah Yûsuf.

"Is it a concert?" Jack inquired of Mrs. Edison, the wife of a stout red-faced man who kept an orphanage for little Jews, a lady with a latent sense

of humour. "Poor Percy! Five persons have been up to 'bray' with him already."

Percy indeed was in a desperate condition. Since Jemîleh had revealed her knowledge of his secret, he wished to speak to her and no one else. But missionary after missionary came and prayed with him, and forced him to re-tell the tale of his assassination, which he was now extremely nervous of repeating, since Jemîleh knew the truth and might have mentioned it. His father kept approaching his bedside with talk about the Consul's interference, meant to soothe, which maddened him.

"I will not have the Consul told!" he moaned at length. "I do not know the names of my assailants. They were many. It was dark, and I could not identify them. The innocent might suffer if the Consul moved. I will not have it."

It was of some slight comfort to him to reflect that the American Consul lived two hundred miles away, and that the Vice-Consul in the city was a native Christian and a friend of his, whom he could easily dissuade from taking any action.

"It is known that they were Muslims of Aïneyn," objected the Khawâjah Yûsuf.

"Who knows that? I, the one they murdered, do not know it. Wouldst thou take vengeance on the innocent? Give up all thought of prosecution, O my father!"

The Khawâjah Yûsuf, speechless with surprise, threw up his hands towards Heaven and prayed si-

lently. He then rejoined the company upon the terrace, big with the tidings that his son forgave his murderers.

The wife of the Presbyterian minister was employed upon a water-colour drawing. Mrs. Edison had brought some fancy needlework, Miss Jones was darning stockings. Miss MacDougal, who possessed some youthful charm, was interposing a good book when necessary between her countenance and the audacious eyes of Jack. The men sat in a group apart with Elsie, discussing Percy's case in a judicial way.

"His scheme, as he explained it to me, is not altogether bad," said Mr. Jones, "though marred, of course, by the peculiar failings of these people who never can dissociate religion from commercial and political advantage. Up to a certain point it is astute. If one converts a Muslim one must find provision for him in some foreign country. He cannot remain here in peril of his life. But the provision which poor Salaman had found reminds one rather of the slave-trade. If he had such a scheme and it got known among the Muslims, it would quite account for the attempt to take his life. The one great obstacle to my accepting that hypothesis is the fact that Percy Salaman is the last man who would ever have thought of doing missionary work."

"I think I can explain that," put in Elsie, with a blush. "He has talked to me a great deal lately, and has asked me for advice. I once said that I thought

we missionaries should pay more attention to the Muslims. He seemed struck with the idea. Soon after that he told me that he had this scheme."

"Ah," remarked the Presbyterian minister, nodding his head with ponderous sagacity. "The motive is now clear. I see no further cause to question his veracity. But you will permit me to remark, my dear young lady, that one cannot talk thus lightly of converting Muslims."

"The difficulties in the way would disappear, I fancy, if any one attacked them boldly," answered Elsie, flushing.

"I daresay others of us thought so once," said Mr. Jones.

The Khawâjah Yûsuf now drew near the group. "Oh, gentlemen and miss," he cried. "You haf not heard! My son forgifs his enemies. He will not haf them bunished. Oh, what a Christian sbirit! I am fery broud!"

Jemîleh, in the meanwhile, had gone up with her aunt into the sickroom to keep Percy company. The old woman's presence, though it saved propriety, did not preclude free conversation, since she knew no English. Percy saw the chance for which he had for hours been praying. "Why did you keep away?" he asked in lamentable tones. "After what you told me this time yesterday, you bet I wished to see you pretty bad."

"I haf to be so fery careful," said Jemîleh, with eyes downcast. "Beeble in the fillage sbeak bad

things because I talk with you. Now, since you've been hurt, they say some relatifs of mine have done it 'cause of that. They're fery wicked, fery cruel beeble." She heaved a sigh, then hung her head forlornly. She knew that Percy's face expressed surprise and rapture. Her knees gave way. A thrill passed through her frame from head to foot. There followed a long pause ere Percy spoke.

"Sakes!" he exclaimed. "To think I never saw it! It's you that's the girl for me, and not that yaller-haired refrigerator. A peach you are and no mistake. If ever I get quit of this here fix, I'll take and ask you to be Mrs. Salaman directly!"

"I couldn't leaf Miss Elsie," sighed Jemîleh, weeping softly.

"I reckon she'll be leaving you right now. That grinnin' feller Fenn he'll catch her, sure."

"You really do not think about her any more?" she whispered. "I thought that you would neffer notice boor Jemîleh."

"I was a fool, I tell you, miss—stone-blind and mad, that's what I was. I let 'em have me on, I see that plain this minute. Say, though, you haven't told them what you know about this business? You won't let on?"

"No, no. I haf told no one," sobbed Jemîleh.

Percy took her hand, which rested on the counterpane. Calling her every kind of tender name, he asked her to befriend him in his miserable plight. The first thing was to make the English give up all

idea of an inquiry or any punishment for the attack on him.

"They cannot stob it," whispered Jemîleh, with a sudden tremor. "The Sheykh Bakîr and all his men inquire. Who knows what they discofer?" Her concern was real, for she feared to lose her new command of Percy if his deceit became the common property.

Percy implored her to approach the mudîr, to lie in wait for him if need be, and persuade him to hush up the matter. Jemîleh, anxious on her own account, required no urging.

The Sheykr Bakîr, attended by Abdullah Shukri and two Turkish soldiers, returning from a long day's ride, was much surprised to see Jemîleh rise before him at the point where the path to the Englishwoman's house diverged from the paved mule-track through the village.

"What hast thou discovered, O my lord?" she questioned eagerly.

"Everything!" he answered in exultant tones.

"Keep the matter secret, for the love of Allah, O my lord! What profit is it to expose his cunning, since already he is out of favour with my lady? He makes no claim, and will repress all outcry. Publish the matter and the Franks will say, 'It is the way of the sons of the Arabs. There is no faith in them.' As if we were devoid of decency!"

"There is sense in what she says," observed Abdullah Shukri.

"Would to Allah I had known of this ere I set out

this morning!" sighed Bakîr despondently. "Supposing that the Consul would be seeking blood for the affair, we rode to Aïneyn, thence to Makarah, then back to Deyr Amûn to seek Amîn the murderer. The man had fled. We followed him to Kefr Jôz, and there we found him, hiding in an oven. We brought him back and have just left him at his house, at liberty upon the understanding that he shall proclaim the truth to-morrow."

"Swear not to tell the English!" wailed Jemîleh.

"On condition that there shall be no pursuit, no crying to the Consul, I here swear it for thy pleasure," said the Sheykh Bakîr.

Jemîleh stooped and kissed his dusty riding-boot.

Returning, she found Percy out of bed, testing his power to walk with help from Umm Rashîd. At sight of her he looked ashamed. She made him get back into bed and then reported her success with the mudîr.

"You're a true friend and no mistake!" cried Percy warmly. "Say, though, it's no joke lyin' right here in this house with the chance o' some one tellin' on me any minute. I guess it's time to quit. Clear out with me to-night. We'll get married in America. It's easy there."

"Do not be so hurried, so imbatient," smiled Jemîleh. "No one shall know anything. You are still too ill to move. You'll see me efery day. I shall not fanish. Haf no fear!"

"I don't object to staying where I am; no, sir,"

said Percy tenderly. "If all's secure. To see you every day beats circuses!"

Jemîleh trod on air as she went out from him. She was unusually pleasant to the Englishmen that evening, even jested with the Khawâjah Fenn in Arabic. At night she could not sleep at all for happiness; and in the morning, after much conferring with her looking-glass, she sought the sickroom with a beating heart. The room was empty. Recovering from the first shock of surprise, she went to question Fâris, who informed her that Barsi had escaped about the fifth hour of the night, soon after all the other khawâjât had gone to bed. He had given Fâris a whole Turkish pound for supporting him upon the walk to his own house. Jemîleh bade her brother hasten to that house for news. In half-an-hour he came again and told her that Percy had been seen at sunrise riding off in the direction of the city with his father, his servant walking by the horse, supporting him.

XX

Two hours' ride from Deyr Amûn, above a mountain gorge of some magnificence, stands a white-washed shrine, its egg-shaped dome surmounted by the crescent; and close to it an ancient tree, a terebinth, quite three parts dead. The shrine is said to mark the burial place of Seth the son of Noah; and the tree is called the Prophet's Tree from a tradition that the great Mahomet, when a camel-driver, rested and prayed beneath its branches. Except for a week in early spring when pilgrims flock there from the villages, the place is altogether lonely, its sole inhabitant the guardian of the shrine, an old blind sheykh of high repute for sanctity.

This personage had joined a party, consisting of Miss Wilding and her brother, Mr. Fenn, Jemîleh and the Sheykh Bakîr, with Fâris and Abdullah Shukri in attendance, which picnicked there through a long summer day. He even deigned to share the food they had brought with them, after Bakîr, who acted as interpreter, had solemnly assured him it contained no filth of any kind. He showed them his arrangements with some pride, the cistern whence he drew his water, the signs—the breath of wind before the dawn, the warmth of sunshine on a certain

stone—by which he ascertained the hours of prayer, his store-room and his sleeping-place, and many talismans.

“Ask him how he manages up here all alone, blind as he is,” said Elsie to her close adherent Richard Fenn.

“He says that here he knows the way. He is at home. In a village he would run into men and houses, or fall down some well.”

“I wish I could speak Arabic like you do,” murmured Elsie, with a sigh.

Jemîleh sat aloof beneath the terebinth, and watched the couple with despairing eyes. Near her reclined her brother Fâris, half asleep. Abdullah Shukri, who had clambered down the gorge a little way, came back and squatted on his heels between them. Jemîleh saw that he too watched the lovers.

“Ma sh’Allah!” he exclaimed after a while. “May they be blessed! The small khawâjah merits happiness. He takes men as he finds them, as God made them. I have heard my lord say that his character is more that of a good Turk than of a Frank. O lady”—here he turned to face Jemîleh—“what are thy thoughts about this marriage which we see approaching?”

“I have no thoughts upon the matter, O my dear. Is it my business? But I think it a strange compliment to any Christian man to say that he is like a Turk, an infidel.”

Abdullah shrugged. “It is my lord’s opinion, not

my own . . . I know why thou art saddened, O Jemîleh. It is the thought of parting with thy lady. But the small khawâjah loves our country. Perhaps she will not leave thee after all."

"Praise be to Allah, I am not dependent on her," said Jemîleh crossly. "To-morrow, if I wished, I could obtain a post as teacher."

"Aye, that is known, by Allah," said Abdullah peacefully.

Jemîleh gazed upon the swell of mountain-tops which in the cruel sunlight seemed of bronze, clenching her teeth and frowning to keep back her tears. Since Percy had forsaken her, she felt forlorn and was the victim of wild tempests of self-pity. She had heard that Percy had fled to the sea-coast with the intention of returning shortly to America. His treason made her cling to Elsie more devotedly. But Elsie was no longer quite the same, thanks to the small khawâjah, as the village people called him. She seemed entirely to have lost that strange desire for making converts which had once alarmed Jemîleh for her mental health. Jemîleh's one hope now was to revive that madness. The small khawâjah prospered in the hour of Elsie's sanity. Her mania would destroy him utterly, for he was not religious. Assuredly Miss Wilding would be shocked to hear that the Sheykh Bakîr compared him to a Turk for laxity.

At length the time came for the start homeward. Fâris and Abdullah fetched the horses and Jemîleh's donkey. What was left of the provisions was given

to the guardian of the shrine, who raised his skinny arms and sightless eyes to Heaven in thanksgiving. The sun was sinking. It was comparatively cool and pleasant riding on the grassy mountain-top. Jemîleh rode behind with Fâris and Abdullah Shukri; the Khawâjah Jack kept side by side with Sheykh Bakîr; while Elsie and the small khawâjah pushed on far ahead.

“What is thy thought, Abdullah? Is the matter fixed, of which thou spakest?” whispered Jemîleh to her right-hand neighbour. She gave a nod in the direction of the lovers, who had reined up on the brink of the descent, waiting for somebody to show the way. The sun’s rays skimming the smooth down illumined them.

“Allah knows!” was the reply. “With us, a couple thus behaving would be wedded or for ever shamed. But Franks are different. It may be that they have not breathed a word of love.”

That was Jemîleh’s own opinion. She decided to warn Elsie, since there might still be time. As she rode down a pathway winding in and out among great rocks, where the procession went in single file and at wide intervals, she thought of what would be her fate if Elsie married Mr. Fenn. Only on one condition would it be endurable: that Elsie should keep on the mission, placing her (Jemîleh) in command there. Jemîleh liked to think of the house as a mission, of herself as a missionary, since missionaries were the richest, most important people she

had known in life. If Elsie married Fenn—an athiest, a scoffer at all goodness—she would think no more of Deyr Amûn, except it might be to subscribe to the dispensary. She would close without regret the little school which gave Jemîleh consequence among the villagers; she would dismiss Jemîleh like a servant with some trifling gift.

The sunset flamed and died. The twilight deepened. Fâris, who led the way, had brought a lantern. He lighted it and hung it low to show the ground, calling out advice to those behind him. The lights of Deyr Amûn were in their eyes for half-an-hour before they reached the fields. Miss Sophy Berenger, protected from a distance by old Abu Fâris, was on the terrace of the house, awaiting them. She said that supper was quite ready. The Sheykh Bakîr was made to stay and share the meal.

When Elsie hurried off to change her riding-habit, Jemîleh went to help her as in duty bound. She said how much she had enjoyed the day, how much she thanked her mistress for such pleasure, and added in the same tone of enthusiasm: "What a cleffer man is Mr. Fenn! He knows so much. He sbeaks quite berfect Arabic. And then he is so good and kind. The beeble luf him!"

"He really is a most delightful person," replied Elsie, laughing happily.

"I think him such a sblendid man and so does eferybody. There is only one thing which the beeble think a bity. It is that he has no religion. The

Sheykh Bakîr he calls him just a Turk, no better. They say he calls the missionaries silly fools, and lufs the Muslims better than the Christians. Ber-habs you speak to him and make him change."

"People tell stories sometimes!" answered Elsie sharply; and Jemîleh knew that she had said enough.

XXI

THE Sheykh Bakîr took leave directly after dinner: Miss Sophy then retired to her own room. The Khawâjah Jack was sleepy, and soon went to bed. Elsie and the Khawâjah Fenn were left alone together, sitting in easy-chairs upon the terrace underneath the pines. Jemîleh, tortured by anxiety, stole near to listen on the other side of the low wall. Her brother Fâris, Umm Rashîd and the housemaid, to whom she had made known her plan, all of them treading upon tiptoe, followed her, drawn by the same fear of losing Elsie. Jemîleh was embarrassed by their presence, dreading lest their whispered questions should be overheard. "What are they saying now?" they asked continually.

Elsie was seeking information about Muslim shrines and Mr. Fenn was giving learned answer.

"Is that what they call lover's talk?" asked Umm Rashîd with scorn and pity.

Jemîleh also felt contempt for them. Here were a man and a woman, deep in love, alone together in the darkness, almost touching one another, yet they could talk of Saracenic architecture. Were they soulless? The gloom was spangled with the dance of fireflies. A warm breeze made a sighing in the branches overhead.

At length, after a pause, Miss Wilding spoke in a new tone. Jemîleh whispered "Hush!" to her adherents.

"You've never told me what you think of missionaries. You know I'm one, though I fear I have not shown it much these last few days. Tell me, will you? We have never talked upon that subject."

Jemîleh told the others what was said. They hardly dared to breathe in the long pause which followed, before the small khawâjah said—

"I have avoided speaking of it because I was afraid you'd think me half a heathen. But since you've asked me outright I must now confess that I am not in love with missionaries, and think myself they do more harm than good out here."

Jemîleh and her shadows hugged themselves. The small khawâjah was a fool. He could not lie.

"Then you're not—what was it that you said?—'in love'—with me?" said Elsie coyly; and Jemîleh shuddered, for she thought, what man could fail to take a hint as plain as arms held out to him?

"You're not a missionary," said the small khawâjah, laughing. "You think you are, but you are not. I know the breed."

"Better and better!" was Jemîleh's verdict. Nothing so annoyed her mistress as to be accused of self-deception.

"Praise be to Allah!" whispered Umm Rashîd.

"Well, let us have it. Why do you object to mis-

sionaries? Will you condescend to tell me? Or is it all too high for my intelligence?"

"Don't talk like that! That's rubbish!" cried the small khawâjah. "I know nothing about missionary work in other countries, but here I can't approve of it. It's such a sordid business—forgive my saying this, but you know you asked me for my real opinion—it's so hopelessly mixed up with trade and politics. The Muslims are the finest people in this country——"

"They're not!" gasped Elsie in a voice of pious horror, which Jemîleh echoed as she passed the tidings on. The listeners were amazed—amazed and scandalized—at the unholy shrewdness of the small khawâjah's judgment. "Curse his religion!" was the sigh of Fâris, who was superstitious.

"They are, if you will deign to judge them by the common standard, and not by the standard of what we call 'modern progress,' which has elements of pure rascality, and in any case is something quite apart from all religion. The missionaries do very little for them—they can't, I admit that—and devote their chief attention to the native Christians. They—or I should say, the worst of them—are easy to convert if you hold out a means of livelihood. Think of the Muslim—the man whom the missionaries came here in the first place to convert. How does it impress him—this spectacle of Christian sects attacking one another?"

"But we do work among the Muslims, so your

argument falls through. Our medical missions and our schools make no distinction."

"I don't object to medical missions or scholastic missions as such. But I think that they'd do better work, on much more Christian lines, if they gave up the converting business altogether. The most that they can hope to do is to confuse the minds of some poor creatures who do not know the teaching of their own religion. I would teach a man his own religion at its best before attempting to convert him to my own."

"It is a case of saving souls from Hell. It's not a prize-fight," remarked Elsie dryly.

Jemîleh could not make out what she meant by that.

Her words too seemed to vex the small khawâjah, for he repeated: "A prize-fight! A prize-fight! Well, perhaps it is, as things go on at present something like it. Quite as amusing and a deal more dangerous! . . . All I really meant to say was, that to wrap up spiritual benefits in material benefits, like a pill in jam, seems to me wrong."

"But the spiritual benefit is so important that it must be given somehow, like the pill you mention," put in Elsie deftly.

"That may be, but the benefit is not self-evident. Before the missionaries of all Christian sects and nations flocked to this unlucky country, the native Christians were in general contented. If most of them were poor, so were most of the Mahometans.

The burden of oppression was on both alike. There was then a chance that the two religions—you may call them races—would advance together to a higher stage of civilization. Now the Christians are made discontented and seditious, petted by the foreign missionaries, who pour contempt on all the customs of the country and teach their converts the innate inferiority of the Muslims, basing their arguments on such unChristian things as iron-clads and steam-engines and factories. Indeed, if you reduce their argument to its absurdity, it would amount to this: that our English Black Country is intrinsically better, being Christian, than that little shrine upon the mountains which we saw to-day. The Christians nowadays are richer than the Muslims, whom they hate and, where they can, despise. They will do everything in their power to prevent the Muslims from advancing to the same prosperity.”

“No doubt all that is very clever. But it strikes me as intolerant and not quite true,” said Elsie tartly.

“I hope it isn’t really that,” murmured the small khawâjah, as if he thought it possible she might be right. His tone came as a revelation to the secret listeners. It showed that he was taking the Sitt seriously, regarding her as quite his equal in intelligence. He had been speaking like a prophet the whole truth unblushingly, yet the lady’s stupid answer struck him dumb.

"The blockhead!" whispered Umm Rashîd.
"Praise be to Allah!"

"It's what I've thought out for myself. I may be wrong. I'm open to conviction. I wish you'd tell me what you think yourself."

"You'd only pick my words to pieces and make mock of them," Elsie made answer fiercely through clenched teeth.

"I shouldn't, as you know quite well!"

"My views are only those of ordinary Christian people. I don't pretend to be so clever as to start a new view of my own. I didn't know you were like this. I never dreamt it." Elsie paused a minute, before adding in a careless tone, "If you ask me what I really think . . . I think it is quite time I went to bed."

The eavesdroppers filed back towards the house. Jemîleh went up into Elsie's room and lighted both the candles on the dressing-table.

"You're fery late, Miss Elsie," she reproached her mistress.

Elsie ignored the greeting, seeming much excited.

"I tell you what, Jemîleh," she exclaimed. "I've been too idle since my brother came here. We must get back to work in earnest when he goes. I've got a plan. Mr. Salaman's queer scheme first put it into my head. We'll go over to Aïneyn occasionally and hold services. Those people are our neighbours. They are still in darkness, and I, who have been here eight months, have not once been to visit them."

Jemîleh's jaw fell and her knees gave way beneath her.

"I wouldn't do that, Miss Elsie, not if I was you. They're Muslims, fery safage, wicked beeble."

"I've seen them when I've ridden through the place. They seem quite friendly. At all events they're going to hear the Gospel."

Jemîleh's very soul was stunned by this announcement. Better a thousand times that Elsie should have married the Khawâjah Fenn and left Jemîleh than that Elsie and Jemîleh both should perish at the hands of savage infidels. The dark girl became now as anxious to promote the marriage as an hour before she had been eager to prevent it.

Having lain awake all night devising means, she rose next morning with a plan complete. But at breakfast Mr. Fenn announced his purpose to depart that very day, persisting in his resolution in spite of the rebukes and insults which Jack poured on him. Both he and Elsie looked unhappy. They avoided one another till the time for his departure, when they said Good-bye with no more warmth than comes of chance acquaintance. Jemîleh longed to push their heads together. She felt desperate.

Following the small khawâjah to his horse, she said in Arabic—

"Your Honour will soon come again, I pray!"

"How can I come again after my friend has gone? There will be only women in the house," he answered coldly.

"Come with your tent and camp above the village. My lady greatly needs a friend and counsellor. She is so brave, so reckless, it resembles madness. Woe upon us! I fear that we shall come to great disaster."

"Perhaps I may return some day," was all he said.

Jemîleh's heart sank lower as he rode away than it had done when she discovered the escape of Percy.

Her brother's sigh of "Praise to Allah!" startled her, sounding the gulf between last night and now.

XXII

JEMÎLEH told her trouble to the Sheykh Bakîr, but he made light of it, declaring that the people of Aïneyn would welcome Elsie if she spoke politely. She then approached the good-natured Khawâjah Jack, who readily agreed to warn his sister. But Jemîleh soon repented of her choice of him, for his idea of tactful intervention was to scoff at missions, thus inflaming Elsie's zeal.

"We will begin in quite a small way at Aïneyn. If that succeeds we will extend the work to other Muslim villages," said Elsie, her ideas enlarging under irritation. Jemîleh's terror grew. She cast about for some strong helper, and could think of no one but the British Consul, who loved the ladies of the school, Miss Wilding's aunts. She resolved to have recourse to Miss Jane Berenger. Miss Sophy was too weak, and would go straight to Elsie.

Accordingly, hearing her mistress speak of riding to the city with her brother to defer the parting, Jemîleh begged for leave to go with them to make some purchases.

The cavalcade set out at sunrise on a cloudless day. Elsie and her brother rode a good deal ahead of Miss Sophy Berenger and Jemîleh, who were

both on donkeys, Fâris some twenty paces in their rear. They were traversing Aïneyn, in shadow from the square stone houses, when Elsie called out: "Come and help me!" and Jemîleh saw her mistress talking to an aged Muslim.

"Tell him of my wish to come and speak to them."

Jemîleh, thus enjoined, informed the man that the noble English lady, being delighted with the situation of Aïneyn and with the manners and good looks of its inhabitants, proposed one day to pay a visit to the place and make the acquaintance of a people so polite and amiable.

"Let her come and welcome!" was the smiling answer. "Our Lord reward her condescension! I will tell our sheykh."

Jemîleh then translated: "He says they will be bleased to see you any time, but you'd best not talk too much about religion, 'cause they're so fanatical."

"He said nothing of the kind," said Elsie sharply. "You forget that I can understand. I wish that you would limit your translations to what people say, and not put in your private views and comments."

"I tell the truth, miss. It is as I say."

"Jemîleh is quite right," cried Khawâjah Jack. "You'd better not say anything about religion. It's just what I've been trying to din into you."

Jemîleh dropped behind to ride with Fâris. She realized how foolish she had been to add her own

remark to what the man had said. If Elsie was by nature unsuspecting, when her vigilance was once aroused it was implacable. Henceforth she would mistrust Jemîleh as interpreter, and insist on speaking for herself, however lamely.

By noon Jemîleh was conferring with the Sitt Afifeh in the latter's bedroom, confiding all her fears and troubles to her former tyrant. Esteeming it a matter of the first importance that her name should not be mentioned as informer, she would not go direct to Miss Jane Berenger.

"Ma sh'Allah! So your lot in life is not all sugar," said the mustachioed middle-aged woman when the tale was ended. "All Frankish women are possessed with devils. The old are bad enough to manage. But the young—Just Allah!—they are worse a hundred times. Well, I will speak a word for thee in old Jane's ear."

At ten o'clock next morning, when Elsie was out riding, Jemîleh got her summons to the presence of Miss Jane. Miss Sophy, looking very sad, was with her sister. The girl repeated all that she had told Afifeh.

"I wish that she would marry Mr. Fenn," she murmured in conclusion. "He lufs her fery much, and she lufs him. Only he made her cross by saying that he disabbroves of missionaries. I wish he would return and safe her from herself. When boor Jemîleh tries to stob her doing something dangerous, she is

so cross! Blease do not tell her that I sboke with you, dear ladies!"

With this petition she withdrew. It was not till two hours later that she learnt the sequel from Afifeh. The ladies had gone straightway to the British Consul, who, hearing their report, had taken them to call upon the Turkish governor. The Wâli had been very kind, they said. He had promised to send his carriage that same afternoon to fetch Miss Wilding and her brother to his house.

The carriage came, to Elsie's great annoyance. The visit was a nuisance, she declared, on Jack's last day. But Jack, who had received a hint, insisted on her going. Jemîleh spent the hours till their return in prayer in Elsie's room.

Elsie at length burst in upon her, flushed and irritated.

"A hateful afternoon!" she cried in accents of disgust. "I sat out in the garden with Emineh Khânum. She is going to be married in a month—what they call marriage! I tried to make her see how horrible it is. She only laughed. She wants me to be present at the wedding, but I shan't. When I got up to go to Jack in the selamlık, what do you think she said? That if I wished to convert Muslims I should come to her, who would be always glad to see me instead of worrying poor fellahîn. So some one has been talking of our plan. Who can it be?"

"I can't think!" gasped Jemîleh with round eyes

of horror, "unless it might be Mr. Jack, berhabs. He sbeak so free."

"Well, I'm pretty sure the visit was a kind of trap to stop us going to Aïneyn, for when I got to the selamlík my brother began begging me to give up the idea—because the Pasha wished it. And the Pasha made me a long speech in French—just the kind of thing one might expect he would say, leaving out religion altogether. I was to remember that as a British subject I had privileges and could not be punished if I caused disorders; the punishment would fall upon the Muslims; was that fair? And so on, just as if I were an agitator! I was too much surprised to answer. But I am more than ever determined to begin that mission, and at once!"

Jemîleh could have shrieked aloud. The terror had returned. It would not leave her.

Elsie was still talking of the visit when her brother came and, heedless of Jemîleh's presence, exclaimed—

"Really, Elsie, you must give up all that nonsense of converting Muslims. It's downright mean, as the old Pasha told you. How would you like it if a Muslim came and preached upon your doorstep once a week because he knew you didn't like his views?"

"Don't talk such rubbish! That is not the case!" cried Elsie in a perfect rage. "I don't care what that wicked old man said. He talked as if I were

an idiot, as if I had no tact, no knowledge of the world. I shall do what I think right."

Jemîleh thought it seemly to retire. She closed the door, but lingered close outside it. Jack argued forcibly and she had hopes that he would win. But presently the poor demented girl began to cry, and his tone weakened. When Elsie sobbed: "It is unkind of you on our last day," Jemîleh heard him flop down on his knees, defeated. Her last hope of escaping martyrdom by outside means was dead. Now either she must save herself or perish miserably; and she felt exhausted.

The Sitt Afifeh tried to calm her, saying—

"There is naught to fear. The Franks to-day have all the power. They do their will. No Muslim dare oppose it, much less harm them—Well, since thou art so much afraid, feign sickness!"

But Jemîleh could not contemplate that course, though she was really ill. The need to watch and worry was too great. As she rode up to Deyr Amûn with Elsie, who spoke little in her grief at parting from her brother, her horror of the danger raised a shouting in her brain. At passing through Aïneyn she shuddered violently; and when at tea on their arrival, Elsie said: "On Friday we will hold our meeting at Aïneyn," she could endure no longer.

"You shall not go to Aïneyn, I tell you! I forbid it! You are a fery foolish, fery wicked girl! Eferybody tell you, but you will not heed them. You wish to die, berhabs. But I will stob it."

Having hurled those words out in a fury, Jemîleh fled to her own bedroom, where repentance overcame her. She thought that Elsie would now hate her, and that seemed worse than the most cruel death. Elsie would go without her to Aïneyn. She would be killed alone, without Jemîleh, hating her. She would think Jemîleh was a coward, had betrayed her; whereas God knew the truth was . . . Here her thoughts were merged in one great flood of grief which found vent in a howl as of a dog in pain.

Her mistress came and strove to pacify her, whispering—

“Don’t come if you’re afraid. But there’s no danger really. Mr. Jones and all the other missionaries preach in Muslim villages. I shall speak very simply—nothing that could anger them. But don’t you come with me if you have any fear.”

“Oh, don’t talk so, Miss Elsie, for you know I luf you! I’d neffer let you go alone among those beeble. I’d stob you going if I could, because I luf you; but if you go I follow just the same. Forgif me what I said. I was so troubled. I do so fear to see you run in any danger.”

“There is no danger, I feel sure. You’re overtired. Go to bed now. I’ll bring you up some supper later on.”

“Oh, dear Miss Elsie, how I luf you! You are so kind, so sweet to boor Jemîleh!”

At that moment of supreme devotion to her mis-

tress, the dark girl felt a positive desire to share her martyrdom. She prayed for strength through half the night, and in the morning went out to seek it from the ministrations of the village priest.

XXIII

THE priest's wife had gone down to do some washing at the spring, and the children had gone with her for the joy of splashing. Antun sat smoking a nargîleh in his doorway when Jemîleh reached it. He bade her welcome, carrying his pipe indoors. She sat down in a corner to escape the glance of any passer by the open door; for there were people in the village who would be delighted to inform Miss Wilding that she visited the priest in secret.

Antun listened to her story without interrupting. The peaceful bubbling of the water in the bowl of his nargîleh, as he sucked the mouthpiece, together with the cooing of some doves out in the sunlight, made her fate appear more horrible. Before the end of the confession she was weeping. The priest considered for a while. At last he took the amber mouthpiece from his lips, observing—

“Healthy young women have their natural functions, apart from which they become dangerous through too much energy, like horses full of corn yet idle. They kick and plunge and terrify the world. A man would calm her.”

“True, O our father; but inform me, for the love of Allah, where in our country is the man to suit her? She would not take a passer-by upon the road.”

"Why did the small khawâjah go away? He was a man of enterprise and common sense; and he desired her."

"O my despair! Have I not told thee? His going was in part my fault. I wished to keep my lady to myself; I feared that if she married him she would forsake me. I abhorred the prospect of her marriage till this terror came upon us, making me desire it more than wealth. Alas! my blindness! The Lord have mercy on us! We shall both be slaughtered miserably. We shall die the death of martyrs. O despair!"

"Shame on thee, O my daughter!" said the priest benignantly. "Is that the way to speak of blessed martyrdom, which gives the crown of everlasting life? Saw I the slightest hope of such preferment for thee, God is my witness, I should not deter thee, rather urge thee on. But the faith thy lady preaches is a filthy heresy, so there can be no martyrdom for her or thee."

"With thy permission, O our father, there thou errest," argued Jemîleh vehemently through her tears. "It is not necessary that a person should be fighting for the truth to gain the martyr's crown. All that is necessary is that he or she should be baptized, a holder of the truth and perish at the hands of infidels."

"And if it be so, how does that concern thee? Art thou a holder of the truth perchance—thou who blasphemest with the Brûtestânts, who partakest

of the bread and wine which the mock-priest from the city administers upon a table in thy lady's chamber, with jests and laughter like a common meal?"

"No, by the Gospel, O our father! It is not like that. All is solemn and most reverent. Come once and see! I seek refuge in Allah from sacrilege and blasphemy."

"Be that as it may, the feast is none the less a mockery. How canst thou hold the truth, when thou defendest it? Thou hast not come up once to worship in the church in all these months that thou art living with the Englishwoman."

"Have pity, O our father!" sobbed Jemîleh. "Allah knows that I have wished to do so, but I dared not. My lady thinks our way of worship evil. If she knew that I had taken part in it she would discard me; she would leave the place. The school and the dispensary would both be closed. Are those benefits worth nothing in thy sight? . . . Oh, Allah knows, with what true faith I came to thee, seeking strength from Heaven wherewith to face this grievous ordeal! How canst thou repel me? If I miss the martyr's glory, it is through thy fault; the Mother of God and all the saints shall hear of it. . . ."

"Well, art thou willing to make full submission and to return to the true fold, performing all thy duties—nay, I say not openly, but secretly and as occasion offers?"

"I am, by the life of the Saviour!"

"Then come into the church with me. Thou shalt have comfort; though Allah knows perhaps I err in giving it. But our Lord is merciful, and since, as thou declarest, there is danger for thee, it is possible for me to regard thee as a sinner at the point of death. I do not altogether blame thy lady. It is better for her to attack the heathen than the Church of Christ. But when one thinks of benefits, it is another story. I fear me she will squander on the infidels those riches which belong of right to Deyr Amûn. Instead of stoning they may flatter her, since she is rich. And I remember how thou didst assure us at her coming that she would spend her money in this village, nowhere else."

"How could I foresee?" Jemîleh wrung her hands and sobbed despairingly. "Am I to blame? Thou seest my distress!"

"I said not that I blamed thee. Come into the church."

After half-an-hour spent in the incense-laden gloom, hearing the mystic, chanted words of one who from a shrewd, facetious man had changed into a radiant being, clear of earth, Jemîleh came forth with hands folded on her bosom, and hastened homeward by secluded paths. She wept a little for the pity of her virgin fate, but with submission, praying ever that sinful fear might not return to spoil her end.

XXIV

MISS WILDING wished old Abu Fâris and his wife, with all the little Sunday congregation, to go with her to Aïneyn; but one and all they begged to be excused. The father of Jemîleh had a dreadful stomach-ache. His wife must stay to nurse him. Another of the faithful had gone lame, and yet another was afflicted with acute ophthalmia. Jemîleh would have given all that she possessed to be disabled by some momentary illness, but she dared not feign one. She sought out Fâris in the hope of sympathy; but her brother, worshipping the ground that Elsie trod on, was quite reckless. It seemed he wished to die defending her.

"They may do their worst to me; I care not!" he informed his sister, "but whoso lifts a hand against my lady, dies that minute."

"For the love of Allah, be not bold, be humble in their sight! Show not a weapon, I implore thee!" moaned Jemîleh.

They started at the third hour after noon, carrying Arabic hymn-books in their saddle-bags. Elsie regretted that they could not take with them the wheezy old piano to accompany the hymns; but the risk of damage to the instrument by transport to

Aïneyn and back upon a camel appeared too great. Her talk seemed folly to Jemîleh, who was wrapped in prayer.

But Elsie's careless manner masked uneasiness, as became evident when Jemîleh, nerved by the approach of danger, said as they reached the bottom of the wady—

“Go back, Miss Elsie, while there is still time! You do not know what you are doing. Think what these beebles did to Mr. Bercy. They do worse to us!”

Elsie's voice shook as she made answer—

“I have said already that your fears are nonsense. They would never venture to attack a British subject. Jemîleh, don't be foolish; you will make me nervous. It is not an easy thing that I am going to do.”

Jemîleh threw herself on Allah's mercy.

They reached Aïneyn. Miss Wilding, after riding through the village, selected a clear space among the houses. It was a slope of thistles and rank grass and boulders, where long-haired goats were browsing. Above it was a ruined tomb with gaping dome, the crescent on its summit all awry. On one side the blind wall of a two-storeyed house threw shade upon a level space of rock. Here they dismounted. Fâris tied up the horses by their headropes, Jemîleh's donkey was allowed to roam.

“How shall we call the people?” Elsie asked, as she laid out the hymn-books.

"There is no need, miss," said Jemîleh grimly. "They are comin'."

In fact, a number of the villagers—men, women and children—had gathered on the edges of the open space to stare at the intruders. Most of the men wore large old-fashioned turbans and loose robes so old that they had lost all colour. The women wore straight gowns of faded indigo and clean white headveils reaching to the waist.

"Tell them to come nearer and sit down," said Elsie.

Jemîleh was preparing to obey when an old man and two youths came running towards them with low salutations. Fâris stood near at guard, with hand upon the pistol at his belt.

"It is the headman of the fillage and his sons," Jemîleh told her mistress. "What he says is, won't you come inside his house and take refreshment? The Sheykh Bakîr has told him you were coming, and he's bleased to see you. I think we'd best do what he says. These safage beebles are so fery hosbitable, they wouldn't hurt us if we 'f had their food."

"We'll hold our service first. Explain to him," said Elsie, who was strung up to one purpose.

"The English lady wishes to address the people. She comes to speak to them of holy things. It is her business," said Jemîleh. "After that she will accept your Honour's kindness with pleasure and much gratitude."

The Sheykh and his two sons protested warmly.

The lady, who was dear to them as their own eyes, ought really to repose a little after her long ride. But, finding her resolved, they shrugged their shoulders and resigned themselves.

"We had better begin with a hymn, I suppose," said Elsie, hoarse with trepidation. "Give the sheykh and his sons hymn-books."

"I'm afraid we shan't make foice enough," faltered Jemîleh.

"We must do something for a start," said Elsie wildly.

Accordingly Jemîleh handed round the hymn-books to those who said that they could read—a very few—explaining as she did so that the lady wished them to join with her in singing praises to Almighty God. They murmured acquiescence and approval. Then Elsie started singing suddenly. The tune was the Old Hundredth. Jemîleh followed in a different key. Fâris, standing defiant with his left hand on his hip, shouted such of the words as he could hear as if he hoped they would destroy the Muslims; giving particular emphasis to the last verse, which he knew by heart, ascribing glory to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Jemîleh trembled at his rashness, feeling sick with fear.

Then Elsie read some prayers. She had a shocking accent, and made no distinction in pronunciation between certain consonants, which made her reading largely unintelligible for people who had never heard her speak before. But the name of Allah, con-

stantly recurring, carried all before it, and several of the Muslims said "Amîn" with Fâris and Jemîleh at the end of every prayer.

When she had finished reading, Miss Wilding asked Jemîleh to explain the reason of her coming.

Jemîleh then informed the people that the gracious lady had come all the way from England, a land of which all the inhabitants were rich and sinless, to teach the sons of the Arabs the great truths which made them so, by Allah's mercy.

Those nearest murmured approval. One old man exclaimed: "The English are good people, friends to El Islâm!"

"Let her speak, in Allah's name!" called out the sheykh with smiles. "God's mercy is the hope of all those present."

Fâris was standing with his back against the wall, staring defiance at the Muslims, one hand upon the pistol in his belt, the other stroking his moustache superbly. His posture was a studied insult. Jemîleh begged him in an undertone to change it instantly.

"Let me translate for you, I beg, I bray!" she cried aloud, beholding Elsie on her feet and gasping.

"No," came the faint reply. "Don't make me nervous!"

Jemîleh felt that her last hour had come. In other circumstances dignified and graceful, Elsie, when preaching in the power of her strange mania, always resembled a great awkward child. She had no tact,

no presence. On this occasion, to Jemîleh's horror, she must needs embark upon the story of the world's redemption. Over and over again she said "dog" when she meant "heart"—"His dog loves you"—"My dog informs me"—till Jemîleh bit her lip in agonies of pure vexation.

But worse was yet to come. Having told the story of Christ's sacrifice in that queer way, Elsie must needs adjure those Muslims to leave all and follow Him.

"Mahomet is not good. Mahomet cannot save you. Mahomet is a liar; he will do you harm. Mahomet is very bad. Isa is good; Isa loves you; Isa died for you. Come to Isa. Leave Mahomet," and so on interminably.

Jemîleh felt as if she were already dead, and looking on from a great distance at the scene whose every feature underwent dilation and contraction in accordance with the beating of her heart, which seemed about to burst. She was sitting very still, afraid to move an eyelid, yet her body seemed to be in constant motion, swaying to and fro or swinging round. When at last she risked a glance in the direction of her mistress, the foremost Muslims had drawn near to Elsie, who was still declaiming quite unconscious of their angry faces. Gazing up at the sky with clasped hands, the fool continued to pour out her childish pleadings.

The sight of Fâris springing to defend his mistress—a yet greater danger—gave Jemîleh strength

to move. She staggered to her brother's side and clutched his arm, beseeching: "Wait—one minute, wait!" She stood before him, facing the excited crowd.

"What words are these the lady utters? Speak, O Nazarene girl! She is cursing the religion of Mahomet, here, in our village, in a Muslim country. We welcomed her, we offered her rest and refreshment; and she gives us this. She shall surely die, and thou with her, O daughter of a dog."

Jemîleh gazed upon the ground, tears pouring down her cheeks. Her bosom rose and fell convulsively. She panted: "For the love of Allah, harm not, O sheykh! It were a shame on thee and all thy people to the end of time. I swear to thee by Allah, there is not a kinder or more courteous lady under Heaven than she is when her mind is in its proper state. But when the fit is on her, she becomes, as you have seen her, rude and shameless. She must go forth and insult the faith of others. It is not only here. It is the same at Deyr Amûn. Ask the priest Antun if thou doubttest my veracity! She insults the Christians also in her madness. What can we do? I and my brother are her servants and we love her. We accompany her to protect her at the peril of our lives. By the living God I swear to thee that she is not responsible."

Elsie by then had finished her address amid an angry murmur. Stones were lifted. But the sheykh and his two sons ran in among the crowd, cursing

the would-be throwers, crying shame on them. A frown of wonder came on all the faces. Then followed smiles of understanding, and the stones were dropped.

"How often does the madness come on her?" a woman whispered.

"Once in every week," replied Jemîleh. "But never have I known her rage so dreadfully as she has done to-day."

"Well, Allah knows it is a pity! Such a fine young woman!"

"Are the fits of long duration?" asked the headman. "My neighbour's son, now gone to Allah's mercy, went mad for weeks together every year."

"With my mistress they pass quickly as a rule. Even now, it may be, she is well again, and has no recollection of the words she uttered."

"May our Lord relieve her!" cried the villagers with one accord, as the sheykh of the village led off the lady to his house to take refreshment. Fâris refused to follow, being angry.

"Curse thy father!" he had whispered in his sister's ear. "Why didst thou tell them she was mad? It warmed my soul to hear her telling the plain truth about their Prophet and their sinful faith, and now thou hast spoilt all by saying she was mad."

Jemîleh shook her shoulders in contempt of him.

The sheykh made much of Elsie through compassion, praising her for having learnt so many words of Arabic. He insisted on her taking food

and drinking coffee. She was gracious and at ease, a different person from the stiff ungainly figure which had stood and preached upon the rock.

"The fit is over, praise to Allah!" said the villagers. When she went out to her horse, the people blessed her. The sheykh repeatedly expressed the hope that she would come again.

"I think our meeting was a great success," she said as they rode back towards Deyr Amûn.

XXV

MISS WILDING was exultant. She thought out fresh sermons and talked already of extending the good work to other villages. Jemîleh, tortured by anxiety, grew irritable in her manner towards every one except her mistress, whom she encompassed with attentions more than ever, thereby hoping to regain control of her proceedings. She did succeed in leading Elsie to perceive that her first sermon to the Muslims had been injudicious, and persuading her to speak at first of subjects on which Mahometans and Christians thought alike. Thus, for a breathing-space, the weekly meeting at Aïneyn was cleared of danger, becoming a mere friendly talk concerning patriarchs and prophets, which disgusted Fâris, who desired strong language even if it brought him martyrdom at Elsie's feet. Compared with an indulgence which he thought derogatory, it seemed of slight importance to this stalwart Christian that his sister should give money to the Muslims in Miss Wilding's name. Yet this it was which angered Deyr Amûn, where considerable indignation was aroused against Jemîleh, who, people said, was nothing better than an atheist. She, poor harassed creature, was aware of the ill-feeling, but could not

spare a moment from her watch upon her mistress to go among the people and explain. A spell of sultry weather, making Elsie fretful, increased the heavy burden of the life she led.

One day an orderly rode up on horseback, the bearer of a letter for Miss Wilding from Emineh Khânum. The messenger was given some refreshment while Elsie read the letter and discussed her answer with Jemîleh. Emineh's wedding was to take place on the morrow. She begged, entreated Elsie to be present. The bridegroom's home was far away at Monastir. It might be the last time that they would ever see each other.

"I'd go if I was you," advised Jemîleh. "You'll see their funny customs. They are not bad beebble."

"You know you always told me they were bad. You think them so," replied her mistress irritably. "I never really liked that girl. I always feel unsettled and unhappy after seeing her. Yet she will cling to me. Look at this letter after I've refused the invitation formally and sent my present. It is persecution."

"Berhabs she really wish to see you to say something. She'll think it quite unkind of you to stob away."

"I can't go. I should have to miss our service at Aïneyn."

"I think a fisit to the town would do you good. You work so hard these weeks. You need a little change."

"I shall say that I am ill and cannot come. I really am ill with this dreadful heat."

Jemîleh's secret hope that Elsie might not only miss the service at Aïneyn, but also find diversion in the city from her projects of conversion which grew more alarming daily, was thus slain. Elsie would not go down to the wedding nor would she entertain the notion of a visit to the city. The heat, she said, would be intense down there, and what amusement could she hope to find? There was no one in the country whom she cared to see.

"She mourns for the Khawâjah Fenn," remarked Jemîleh to herself. "Her soul repents of driving him away."

Moved by Jemîleh's picture of her loneliness, still more by the suggestion, deftly made, that the missionaries would be much astonished by her progress at Aïneyn, Elsie did at length invite Miss Sophy Berenger, Mr. and Mrs. Edison and Mr. Jones to stay with her for a few days. But their visit proved a failure from Jemîleh's point of view, since their astonishment at her success encouraged Elsie. Mr. Jones went with them to Aïneyn, and gave a short address. His Arabic was good, his tone conciliatory; and the people heard him gladly, saying it was Muslim talk. He congratulated Elsie gravely on her missionary prowess, with the result that, in her conversation with Jemîleh afterwards, she spoke of the Aïneyn people almost as her converts, and planned their full instruction in the Christian faith.

And no sooner had her visitors departed than she began to put her plan in practice, deaf to all Jemîleh's veiled remonstrances.

Once more, Jemîleh knew the fear of death, while Fâris manifested fierce excitement and a holy joy. Distractedly she begged forgiveness of the sheykh for Elsie's rudeness, declaring that it was an illness—she was not accountable.

The Muslim villagers were most long-suffering. But hearing their belief insulted regularly once a week, even by a woman of deranged intelligence, could not be pleasant to them. Jemîleh, keen of hearing in her apprehension, heard men grumbling, asking Allah what abominable crime they had committed to be afflicted in this manner week by week. The sheykh suggested to her very gently that the lady should be taken to distress some other place, by way of change.

"Allah forbid!" she wailed in whispers, wringing her hands and turning up her eyes to Heaven. "How can I take her among strangers? Unaware of her infirmity, they would stone her till she died, with us her servants."

"True," agreed the sheykh and all the elders, upon brief reflection. "But still it is extremely hard on us. It may be dangerous for her in time. Our folk grow restive."

Jemîleh, as has been already said, had made a trifling gift of money to the sheykh each week—"for the poor" as she expressed it diplomatically.

She contrived to do this sometimes by persuasion of Miss Wilding, more often by economies upon the housekeeping. A day came when the sheykh thrust back her hand, exclaiming —

“Wherefore give me money every week? If we bear the lady’s insults it is through compassion. And our patience, God knows, may not last for ever. Put back the money in thy purse and go in peace.”

At those words Jemîleh’s very soul was paralyzed. Her terror gave her strength to tell her mistress what had happened; but Elsie only laughed at her forebodings, her own view being that the Aïneyn people were quite friendly, and that they enjoyed the meetings, in which they were beginning to take an intelligent interest. If some fanatics in the village wished to stop those meetings, it only proved that they were having some effect; she could not now turn back; and so on, till Jemîleh could have screamed and killed herself.

The dark girl knew not where to look for help. She could not have recourse to the priest, lacking time for a long explanation. Antun and all the village blamed her for the money squandered on the Muslims, exaggerated by the tongue of rumour to a monstrous sum. Besides, she shrank from publishing her inability to move the Sitt a hand’s breadth from her path of madness. After the next meeting she took the headman of Aïneyn aside, described to him her plight, and begged for mercy.

“Why should we suffer for thy sake?” he

answered sternly, "because thou art incompetent to guard thy lady, yet wouldst keep respect? For thy lady we have all compassion, for thee none. Come not again into our village, thou or the lad thy brother. Let the lady come alone. She will be safe with us—safer, God knows, than with such snakes as thou art. If thou comest hither after this we shall know what to do."

"I must be with her. How can I desert my lady?" moaned Jemîleh, stricken as with palsy.

"Do what pleases thee, but I have warned thee," said the sheykh.

At once on her return to Deyr Amûn, Jemîleh went for counsel to the Sheykh Bakîr. She found him sitting on a chair beneath the fine arcade before his house, Abdullah Shukri standing near with back against a pillar. It was with immense relief that she beheld those two alone, for on the way she had been dreading there might be a crowd. In presence of those two, who were as one, she could speak freely.

XXVI

"HAVE no fear," exclaimed Bakîr, when he had listened to Jemîleh's story.

"The people of Aïneyn will not molest thee or thy lady. The sheykh is a hot-tempered man; I know him well. Something had occurred to anger him, and he spoke fiercely. He has told me more than once that he is pleased to see thy lady and that his people take a pleasure in her conversation."

"That was so while she was content to speak to them about the patriarchs," Jemîleh wailed, "but now she makes attacks on their religion."

"Merciful Allah! Is that so?" exclaimed Bakîr, astonished. He sat in thought a minute, before adding: "But still I cannot think that there is any danger. She is a woman, and thou sayest that they think her mad. It may be they suspect thee of inciting her. It seems unlikely, yet it may be so. Do as the sheykh said: Let the lady go without thee. Have no fear."

"How can I fail her? She will seek to know the reason, and I cannot lie successfully when she looks straight at me. Besides, there may be danger for her. The sheykh was very angry. He refused the money—an unheard-of thing!" Jemîleh whimpered.

"By Allah, now I see it! It was that which angered him. He is a man of honour and most hospitable. He objected to have money given him at every visit, as if his hospitality had been for sale. Have no fear, I tell thee."

"By Allah, have no fear," put in Abdullah Shukri, who admired Jemîleh with a laughing pity, seeing her unfounded terrors and the subtlety which she expended on such simple plans. "I myself will see the headman of Aïneyn and make all smooth before you go again."

"She torments herself with fancies," he informed his lord when she had gone.

"I think so also," said Bakîr good-naturedly.

But on the morrow they were forced to change their minds, for Abdullah, when he woke his master in the morning, had to tell him that the headman of Aïneyn, Muhammed Abdu, and three elders, Hasan, Nûr-ed-din, and Abdul Câder, had been waiting under the arcade since sunrise. Bakîr gave order that they were to be admitted, and when he knew the object of their visit, sprang up in great excitement and began to dress himself, regardless of their presence in the room.

"Admit that it is hard on us," their spokesman urged, "to have to listen to this lady every week. The Franks are powerful and arrogant. Their consuls justify their every action. How can poor Muslimîn like us hope to obtain redress against an English lady? Yet, if this plague continues, harm

may come to her. Our people murmur. They declare that they have seen the boy and girl, her servants, grin delightedly when she insults our Faith. They say the Nazarenes have set her on to anger us in order to make trouble which may furnish an excuse for war, so that the Franks may send an army to destroy us. Thee we know for a just man, a lover of poor people, no fanatic. We hear that thou art of the friends of this poor lady. Persuade her to give up tormenting us. For the love of Allah, we beseech thee, O benign of heart!"

"Wallahi," laughed the Sheykh Bakîr, "I have no power to move her; and the madness which afflicts her is so common with the Franks that they regard it but as natural conduct. She is otherwise the pearl of ladies, kind and simple. I would protect her from the ignominy of a public scandal no less than I would save you from a persecution which you find unbearable. I go directly to the city, to the Wâli's Excellency. Have patience until my return. All will be well, in sh'Allah."

"In sh'Allah!" cried the deputation, smiling as one man. His genial, sympathetic tone relieved their minds.

In half an hour the Sheykh Bakîr was in the saddle. It was still quite early, and the shutters of Miss Wilding's house were not yet opened, he observed, as he careered along the terrace just below it. By the fourth hour of the day he reached the city and, after stabling his mare, went straight to

the government buildings. There he sat and waited, smoking, with a crowd of small officials in the Wâli's anteroom, until his Excellency was at leisure to receive him—a full hour. But when once he stood in presence of the Wâli there was no more loss of time. Hearing his errand, Hasan Pasha took a pen and wrote upon a sheet of note-paper, while he remarked—

“Well done, to come at once to me! The matter is indeed most serious. I had already warned that lady of the danger and indecency of such behaviour. Our lord reward thy vigilance, O sheykh. Here, take this note in my handwriting to the English Consulate. The Consul will no doubt receive thee. Tell thy story, and then come hither and report his judgment—or no, I may have left ere then. Go to my house.” Ten minutes later Bakîr was with the English Consul, who received him kindly, but, when he knew his business, showed extreme annoyance, ruffling his hair and stamping up and down.

“I suppose I must go with you to the Wâli!” he exclaimed at length in accents of despair.

He went much further with Bakîr, for at the third hour after noon they were approaching Deyr Amûn together, the Consul in full state with his Cawwâs before him. This servant was resplendent in pale blue and silver, while the Consul was in white; as if (thought Sheykh Bakîr) the great one had removed his dignity, finding it too hot to carry, and had made of it another man to ride before him.

The splendour of that servant, seen afar, caused folks to hasten to the housetops and scramble down the terraces of Deyr Amûn. The rumour of the Consul's coming spread like wildfire. He had not been ten minutes in Miss Wilding's house before there was a crowd upon the terrace, questioning the servants, and admiring the Cawwâs, who said no word to any one, but sat at ease upon a chair which had been placed for him beside the doorway, one hand upon the handle of his monstrous scimitar. By then the Consul had already had his conversation with Miss Wilding. It was not a long one.

"I command you to stop teasing those poor people at Aïneyn. If you disobey my order you will force me to report the matter, in which case you will probably be asked to leave the country."

Elsie, taken by surprise, was cowed completely. "But there has been no trouble," she objected wonderingly. "The people seemed to like the meetings; they were well attended. We were getting on so splendidly."

"The sheykh of the village has complained to the authorities, declaring that the meetings, as you call them—he used another word, he called them insults—if continued, may cause very serious trouble. I have no option but to order you to stop them, with all the authority which I possess as representing England."

"Then there is no more to be said, of course. There will be no more meetings."

"Thank you," said the Consul, and he changed his tone for a facetious one to add: "Now, since I've ridden all this way on your account, the least that you can do is to offer me a cup of tea."

"With pleasure," was the rather cold response, as Elsie went to give the necessary orders. She took the same occasion to inform Jemîleh of the Consul's errand.

"What have I been telling you all this time, Miss Elsie?" cried the latter, doing her best to hide her inward rapture at the news. "It's no good breachin' to the Muslims. They are such fanatic beeble."

"Nonsense!" snapped Elsie. "Can't you see? Our mission has been too successful. There is an immediate prospect of the people of Aïneyn becoming converts. The Turkish governor becomes alarmed, and hurries to the British Consul with this cock-and-bull story of impending riots. It is as clear as daylight. They are capable of organizing riots; they are capable of anything in such a case. That is the only danger of the situation. That and nothing else impels me to give up the meetings."

To contend for truth upon a matter past and done with would have seemed the height of folly to Jemîleh. Her end was won, her weekly martyrdom was over. Her one fear now was lest the purpose of the Consul's visit should be noised abroad, and Miss Wilding consequently lowered in the eyes of Deyr Amûn. Accordingly, as soon as Elsie left her, she went and told her brother Fâris, as a secret,

that the Consul's errand to their mistress was political and most important. The meetings at Aïneyn were to be discontinued while he, the Consul, forced concessions from the Wâli. She would say no more.

"Praise be to Allah!" answered Fâris, much impressed. "It is good to know that they will be humiliated, though I shall miss the sight of their glum faces once a week."

He carried the great news at once into the crowd, and so it came to be believed in Deyr Amûn that the British Consul was at one with Elsie in showing favour to the Muslims of Aïneyn. His stopping at the latter village on his way back to the city confirmed this notion in the public mind. The British Government for some political advantage was coquetting with the Muslim population. It was asserted that Miss Wilding, at the Consul's instigation, would buy land at Aïneyn, and build on it that very hospital which Deyr Amûn had waited for so long in vain. The Christians murmured of intense disgust.

XXVII

“JEMÎLEH, I’ve decided: when this storm in a teacup has blown over we will go to work at El Macâm and other Muslim villages. We’ll have a little camp and move about. I’ve been thinking over all my speeches at Aïneyn, and I see now plainly that I made mistakes. I intend to let you do the speaking when we start again.”

Jemîleh had been happy sitting underneath the umbrella pines, dictating simple phrases like “the cat is black” to six small village children holding slates before them, when Elsie came to her with that announcement and, having made it, went away again. She felt as if the firmament had given way. She could not well dismiss the children till their time was up, having put off their lesson once already that same morning. It was now the afternoon. There was a sighing in the pine-boughs overhead, suggestive of a coolness which had no existence. Outside the patch of inky shade in which she sat with her disciples, the whole world baked and sweltered in tremendous heat.

It was not the first time since the Consul’s visit that Elsie had approached the subject of a fresh attack upon the Muslims. The enforced repose from

missionary labours, together with much riding exercise, had made her sanguine. But now she formally announced her resolution not only to renew her mad attempt upon a larger scale, but also to throw all the burden of it on Jemîleh.

In that black hour Jemîleh hated Elsie. She thought of going to Amîn the murderer with money—Elsie's money; she would steal it for the purpose—and persuading him to teach her mistress shame. She thought of being murdered like poor Percy Salaman—whom she chose to think of as deceased to save her pride. What Elsie needed was a shock of personal emotion, something to make her feel that she possessed a heart. If only Mr. Fenn had not departed! If only Allah, the All Merciful, would send him back! Was it for this that she (Jemîleh) had angered all the village, even her own parents, by her zeal for Elsie's interests? The people could bear witness to her perfect service. They would pity her and blame her wicked mistress, when they knew the truth, and they should know it presently. She need no longer make a secret of her lack of influence, since her rupture with the Sitt would make it common talk. She would be obliged to return to the Misses Berenger, as a servant under orders from the Sitt Afifeh, or else to live with her parents here in Deyr Amûn, helping her mother in the fields, a wretched peasant. She had done all things for the Englishwoman who would thus degrade her. The

village should hear all that she had done and judge between them.

All this was seething in her brain while she went on dictating to the children, mechanically, in a voice unlike her own. The lesson ended, she repaired indoors, put on her lace mantilla and white cotton gloves, took up her parasol, and was just going out when Elsie called to her: "Jemîleh! Is that you? Come here! I want you."

The habit of obedience to that voice was strong in her. She hesitated for a moment while her courage flickered; then suddenly the sense of grievance overwhelmed her, her courage flamed, and with an angry sob she fled the house.

Ten minutes later she approached the door of Antun's dwelling. Like every other door in Deyr Amûn, in summer it stood open all day long. She felt extremely nervous, much inclined to cry. The priest received her coldly, as she had expected. His wife and children were indoors with him; but, far from seeking privacy for her confession, Jemîleh would have called the world to witness it. The story was a long one as she told it, with plentiful digressions and appeals to Allah and the saints. The priest throughout preserved his cold demeanour. When Jemîleh had exhausted all the words that came to her, he pushed back the long hair from off his temples, looking straight at her with a strong sneer.

"By Allah, it appears to me that thou art rightly served, O clever lady! Didst thou not come to me

one morning, with just such another piteous tale, protesting that the Englishwoman's wish to benefit the Aïneyn people was most hateful to thee? Yet thou it was, we know, who gave them money every week." That squandering of untold wealth on infidels had injured Antun personally, for the men who had agreed to pay him yearly tribute for his absolution now refused the money because Miss Wilding's favours had not come their way. He therefore spoke with bitter feeling on this subject. "The Lord knows how much thou didst give; I ask thee not; but whether it was much or little, thou hast defrauded Christendom of that amount."

"I gave it for our lives, in fear of death," faltered Jemîleh.

"Your lives? A pretty tale! Where was the danger? The preaching was not serious, or they would not have borne with it through all those weeks. What she said—by Allah, I can hear her saying it!—was 'Your religion is the same as ours; black is really white; a goat is after all a sheep if one regards it rightly; come unto me and I will give you money.' That is the way they all begin, these hypocrites!"

"Stop, O our father! By the Gospel thou art utterly deceived." Jemîleh interrupted with a sudden change of voice from woe to triumph. "The case was not so. Hadst thou heard her, thou wouldst have trembled for our lives as I did. She insulted their religion, called their Prophet evil names, bid-

ding them repent of their false doctrines and iniquities—all in the language of the kitchen and the stable, pronounced as owls pronounce—poor foolish lady. The taste of death was in my mouth, by Allah! I told them the plain truth, that she was mad.”

“What words are these?” exclaimed the priest, incredulous, yet deeply interested in this new disclosure. He put some searching questions to the girl until, convinced that she was speaking truth at last, he lay back on the couch and roared with laughter. Recovering enough to speak, he told the children to run out and call the neighbours; then rolled again on the divan in helpless mirth. Jemîleh now for the first time aware that there was something comic in the tale which she had deemed so grievous, perceiving also that the laugh was not against herself or Elsie, but the Muslims of Aïneyn, was moved to smile.

She told the tale anew for every comer, adopting a facetious tone in keeping with her altered feelings, delighted to be once more popular. Fâris was summoned. He confirmed her story, but took exception to the general laughter. He swore by Allah that his mistress was a saint, and had assailed the Muslims like a lioness, taunting them with their ill-deeds, their unbelief. By then the room was full to overflowing. His earnestness increased the roar of laughter. It came out that the purpose of the Consul’s famous visit had been to stop the English-

woman's preaching, which had galled the luckless Muslims past endurance.

"Praise to Allah!" cried the priest, transported. "I thank the Lord that I have lived to see this day. Had I died yesterday I should have missed the best of life. Excellent lady! Let her go on and on, enrage them more and more until they burst with rage contained. They dare not touch her, for is she not protected by the Powers of Europe? It is well seen that El Islâm is finished, praise to Allah!"

"Allah forbid!" cried out Jemîleh wildly. "My care is to prevent her going on. We shall be stoned to death."

"Nay, have no fear!" exclaimed an elder. "Thou hast but to inform the Consul; he will stop her. But let her taunt them once or twice, I do adjure thee. By Allah, we will all escort her like an army. We will disguise ourselves as Muslims for the joy of hearing."

Jemîleh left the house of Antun in a state of spirit vastly different from that in which she had approached it but an hour before. She had lost her sense of grievance, and all bitter feeling towards her mistress. She now had all the village on her side.

"Where have you been?" was Elsie's question when Jemîleh entered. "I hunted for you everywhere to know where you had put those prayer-books."

"I am fery sorry I was out when you required

me. The beeble told me one of my relations was so fery ill that I ran out to fisit her at once."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Who is it?"

"Umm Abdullah. I don't think you'f seen her. She is not quite so ill as beeble told me, I am glad to say."

Jemîleh was exceedingly attentive and amiable to her mistress all that evening. Though Elsie talked about her missionary projects, Jemîleh neither shuddered nor turned pale, but listened with indulgence as to sick imaginings.

Next morning, having finished with her little school—the children waited in the olive-grove behind the house until she called them for an hour's instruction—Jemîleh sat with Elsie on the terrace doing needlework. The English girl would talk about her great campaign against the Muslims, and Jemîleh, though she listened with a show of grave attention, surveyed the landscape in the hope of some relief. Four women and some little boys were picking grapes among the vineyards up above the palace of the Sheykh Bakîr. Lower down on the same slope, a man sat cross-legged in the shade of fruit-trees. No other human being was in sight. Jemîleh turned her gaze round to the opposite direction, where she could see another mountain-side in profile, with trees and houses rising to the little church, above which was a rocky crown of barren land. As her eyes rested on that height, she was aware of men and horses moving, first against the

sky, then coming down the surface of grey rock and withered grass. She gave but little heed to the phenomenon, although she watched it, till a white spot appeared upon the level ground behind the church. A tent was being pitched—two tents, and a canvas wind-screen for the cook's fire, she counted while her mistress still kept talking madness. Horses and mules were hobbled and allowed to graze. A flag, which presently went up above the largest tent, looked red at first until Jemîleh narrowed her long-sighted eyes upon it, when it proved to be the Union Jack, the flag of England. "Some missionaries," her soul told her with disgust, for missionaries had a bad effect on Elsie. Then a malicious thought occurred to her.

"I wish that Mr. Fenn would come again!" she murmured, turning to look at Elsie, who, to her satisfaction, blushed a lively crimson. She looked away again and added: "It is such a bity that he went away. He luffed you so. I think he would haf got religion from you if he'd stayed a bit."

"Jemîleh! How often have I told you my objection to that stupid phrase? You must not use it. Religion isn't a disease," snapped Elsie, glad to cover her confusion. But Jemîleh had an arrow in reserve. She pointed to the height above the church, exclaiming—

"An English traffeler has come. There is the English flag."

Having given time for hope to rise in Elsie's

bosom, she subjoined: "I fear that it is only stupid missionaries."

"You must not talk like that!"

"Why not, Miss Elsie dear? Are they not stupid when we wish for Mr. Fenn?"

Miss Wilding made no answer. She soon went indoors, when Fâris came with horror to inform his sister that the small khawâjah had in truth returned and was encamped up by the church. He was much astonished when she praised God for the tidings.

"But he will try to win her as he did before."

"God grant that he may win her. She needs government."

"By Allah, thou art mistress of all caprice, O daughter of a dog!" said Fâris angrily.

"And thou art destitute of all intelligence, may thy house be destroyed!" rejoined Jemîleh, with a scornful laugh.

She did not tell the news to Elsie, being unwilling to curtail the pleasing spectacle of her suspense. The fair girl needed suffering for education, and had deserved it richly at Jemîleh's hands.

In proportion as the afternoon wore on and no one came, Elsie, from merely nervous, grew morose and irritable. Jemîleh, reckless in the knowledge she alone possessed, said all she could to aggravate this state of mind, till Elsie at the last, upon a burst of passion, declared she had a headache and would go to bed. She was marching to the door in dudgeon when the voice of Mr. Fenn, uplifted in

a salutation to the doorkeeper, arrested her. A minute later Fâris flung the door wide open, and the small khawâjah entered with his funny smile which seemed to make a jest of everything, himself included. Elsie, on her side, looked as cold as ice. Jemîleh thought it best to leave them to themselves. Outside the door she heard him saying—

“I offended you the last time I was here. I didn’t mean to, and I want to say I’m sorry.”

“Have you changed your views?” asked Elsie, with a touch of malice.

“Can’t say I have.”

“Then what’s the use of saying that you’re sorry?”

Already they were on the dreadful subject of religion. Jemîleh gave them up to Allah’s mercy.

XXVIII

IN the meanwhile the delight of Deyr Amûn went on increasing, and Miss Wilding was acclaimed as an avenger sent from God.

The Shekyh Bakîr, although he lived apart, saw many visitors, everybody of the least importance in the village going to his house at some time every day to pay respect. He heard a dozen different versions of the story, and corrected each, acknowledging that he had known the truth from the beginning.

"Why didst thou not reveal it?" Antun chided. "By Allah, it was no good deed to hide it from us. And how couldst thou thyself contain it without bursting?"

"I have too much respect for the lady to wish to circulate a story to her disadvantage."

"Her disadvantage? Nay, by Allah, it is to her honour. Never before did we esteem her half so highly."

"Thou art a fanatic, O our father!" laughed Bakîr.

"And thou a free-mason!" replied the priest, employing the most deadly insult in his whole vocabulary without the least ill-feeling, as his smiles attested.

Bakîr essayed to reason with the people, declaring that the English lady had no hatred of the Muslims but a liking rather; that her insults had been altogether unintended, the mere result of a defective knowledge of the language; that her privileged position as a foreign subject, having been granted by a Muslim government for her protection, could not honourably be employed against the Muslims. This only made the joke scream louder to the public mind. The power of the Sitt Alsi might be all unconscious: none the less it gave the Christians the command, since she, a Christian, could affront the Muslims with impunity. It was reported that the Wâli of the province—that old lion even—had fallen on his knees before the English Consul, imploring him with tears to stop those insults to the Muslims of Aïneyn, which showed the common people all too plainly that the power of El Islâm was broken. The Consul had been well content to humour him, since the Christians were now certain of the mastery. The Sitt enjoyed the favour of the Powers of Europe; and her protection was on Deyr Amûn, where she resided. The men of Deyr Amûn might therefore browbeat Muslims—aye, and chastise them, if they wished to do so—without fear of punishment.

There was comparatively little intercourse between the villages. People from Deyr Amûn had to pass through Aïneyn on their way to the city, and business daily led some persons from Aïneyn to

traverse Deyr Amûn. Such wayfarers were always courteous in their bearing, not so invariably those whose camp they traversed. Two peasants from Aïneyn, one of them leading a donkey on which sat a veiled woman with a baby at her breast, happened to pass the principal tavern of Deyr Amûn one evening just before the sunset, an hour when many men, some of them already drunk, were sitting underneath its arbour. They were greeted with derisive shouts, and asked how they had enjoyed the Englishwoman's sermons.

"Ha, she is a truth-teller, a prophetess, by Allah! She let you know the error of your ways. She will make you kiss the Cross to-morrow. It is known."

"Allah forbid!" exclaimed the wayfarers in pious horror, for the Cross in their opinion was a ghastly idol.

"The Englishwoman told you what we think of you," one drunken lout cried out, and spat towards them. The population of the tavern rose, upsetting chairs. A man exclaimed in tones of agony—

"Have patience, O my masters! Be not as wild beasts! Eschew all rudeness, all degrading violence." It was Amîn the murderer. He might as well have spoken to the vine-boughs overhead or to the setting sun. The Muslims had repaid the Christian's taunt in kind. A shower of stones pursued them from the tavern. Luckily they were by that time out of range. They answered with a mocking laugh as they sped on. The laugh was

echoed by the crowd of Christians, one of whom vociferated—

“Only wait! you shall learn manners. We will teach you. We are no longer children of the Arabs; we are English, by the Sitt’s protection. Learn to kiss the ground between our feet, O poor galled dogs!”

After that, whenever anybody from Aïneyn showed face in Deyr Amûn, he was assailed with taunts about the degradation of Islâm; and the people of Aïneyn retaliated naturally upon men from Deyr Amûn whose road lay through their village. There were little brawls. The Sheykh Bakîr denounced the Christians, called them beasts and imbeciles. They did not care; the joy of teasing ancient foes with safety made them deaf to arguments. He called a council of the elders of Aïneyn, who promised him, for the respect they bore him personally, to restrain their people from offensive measures so long as Deyr Amûn confined its provocation to mere words and random stone-throwing. All was in vain.

One afternoon some Christian children, happening to have wandered down into the wady, were playing on the bed of rocks beside the torrent which at that season could be jumped across in many places, when they came upon some Muslim children on the Deyr Amûn side of the stream. They assailed the trespassers with mortal insults, which were well retorted; and a fight ensued. The Muslims, finding

themselves outnumbered, ran at last, leaving one of their company, a little boy of ten, who had been stunned by falling on a rock. Him the Christians, in their pious anger, killed with stones. A man of Deyr Amûn, who had been working in a field above, had shouted curses on them for young malefactors, but they had not heard his voice in the excitement of their work. He now came leaping down among them, spade in hand, as they stood gaping round their fallen enemy, astonished to perceive that he was really dead. It was Amîn the murderer.

A boy was saying: "He died quickly. It took us a much longer time to kill the adder."

"May your houses be destroyed and your posterity cut off for ever!" cried the grown-up, aiming blows to right and left. "What work is this, O children of the Evil One? Now nothing under Allah can avert a war. Are we never to advance in civilization and politeness; are we never to escape from violence?" Amîn was sobbing. "Alas, the deed is done. It is from Allah! And since the deed is done I must needs help you." He told them that they had killed the youngster as one kills a Christian, not as one kills a Muslim. Distinction even in the act of murder must be made between mere heathens and the people of the Cross. He showed them how to mutilate the body properly—the sight affected some of them with sickness—and, having done so, made a deep hole in the wady, stamped the corpse down into it, and rolled a great stone over

all, while the children by his orders covered every trace of blood, and made it seem as if the place had never been disturbed. He then said "Run!" and they all scrambled up the steep cliff fledged with brushwood to the terraced fields, and so on to the village, where Amîn went straightway to the priest to make confession.

Antun, having heard his tale, commanded him to go at once and tell the Sheykh Bakîr that, as the mudîr of the district, he might warn the English Consul that the village where Miss Wilding lived was in great danger. Amîn obeyed. To his intense surprise the Sheykh Bakîr at once arrested him and sent him to the city with his hands bound, under the escort of two soldiers; not by the high road, but by lonely ways where was no hope of rescue.

XXIX

THE sun had set. The foot of the mountains and the plain beyond had faded into night; but the high slope of Deyr Amûn, the houses, orchards, gardens and the rocks above, still caught the after-glow and shone out as a landscape between earth and sky, cast in such strong relief that every thistle, stone and tuft of grass was seen distinctly on its patch of shadow. The Sheykh Bakîr, having watched Amîn the murderer and his escort till they vanished in the gloom below, remained upon the housetop, lost in thought. Abdullah Shukri was up there behind him, waiting until his lord should please to speak.

Suddenly a sound of many voices rose up from the porch. A servant of the house sent up a cry of "Ya Abdullah!" Abdullah Shukri, thus invoked, arose and went down, noiseless in his stocking feet. He soon returned and, going close up to his lord, said softly: "The sheykh of the village and the priest are there below, with many others. Their purpose is unfriendly. They would make us prisoners."

"I come," replied the Sheykh Bakîr, with a great yawn, and stretched himself before descending.

Two lanterns hanging in the long arcaded porch had been already lighted. Their rays shone on a score of faces, mostly bearded, surmounted by a great variety of headdress, from the tall black cylinder of the Orthodox priest and the coloured turban of the village headman to the deformed and tasselled fez of a huge uncouth man who leaned defiantly against a pillar with arms folded. They all, with the exception of this last, saluted Sheykh Bakîr, who begged them to sit down, but none complied. The headman appeared shamefaced and the priest demure; the others awkward, sullen or defiant.

"O Efendi," began Antun the priest in mellifluous tones. This manner of address announced hostility, for only as a Turkish official was Bakîr styled Efendi. Among the Christians and the Arabs generally his rank was Sheykh. "O Efendi, the people are commoved by reason of the thing thou knowest. Their thoughts are of defence against the Muslimîn. Thou hast reviled them in the past and so they fear that thou wilt reckon it thy duty to oppose them now, with thy few men, endeavouring to stop or mar the work they have to do; or worse, that thou mayest give a warning to the government which, being Muslim, will support our enemies. They would not, for their lives, that harm should come to thee. Therefore they beg of thy exalted Honour to condescend to be confined awhile in this thy house, which they will guard from ill. Grant their petition, O Efendi——"

"Nay, O our father! We make no petition!" broke in the ruffian who leant up against the pillar. "No, by the Cross of Christ, we give an order which shall be obeyed. But first we ask a question. Is the Sheykh Bakîr here present a Christian or a Muslim?"

"Wait but a minute till I teach thee manners, O Najîb!" cried out Abdullah Shukri. "How darest thou pronounce such words in such a house as this, revered of Christendom? Think of thy fathers and of his, and be ashamed, O misbegotten!"

"The right is with Abdullah. Be more mannerly!" put in the headman of the village, looking far from happy, for he himself had been a servant in that house.

The young churl gave his interrupters but one angry look, and then continued—

"Do we forget how he has called us ignorant fanatics, sons of dogs, and madmen? We bore with his rude words in time of leisure, but now, in time of business, we will not endure them. It is Holy War."

"Hear me repeat those words!" cried out the Sheykh Bakîr, standing erect and looking round on the assembly. "You are ignorant fanatics, madmen, sons of dogs, and in addition liars if this person is your spokesman, for your quarrel is not holy, Allah knows! Some of your children murdered a small Muslim child."

At that arose loud outcry of denial.

"A small child!" bellowed one. "It was a monstrous lout, almost a man full grown. It was by Allah's mercy that he fell and struck his head or he would have slain all our children. My two boys were present and they saw what happened. What can your Honour know about the matter?"

Another shouted: "It was done in self-defence. It was not the children either who destroyed that wild beast—no, by Allah; it was Amîn the murderer, who rushed down from his field to help them and preserve their lives. Where is Amîn? He can assure thee of the truth of what I say."

"Aye, where is Amîn? I saw him coming to this house."

"Thou hearest, O our father, how his Honour still provokes and taunts us, even in this hour of rage and bitter grief."

"The Muslimîn attacked our children, tried to murder them!"

"They have sworn to root us out of this our land!"

"Where is Amîn?"

"Aye. Bring Amîn! Let him bear witness here before us, and instruct his Honour!"

"Amîn is close at hand," shouted Abdullah Shukri so as to be heard above the tumult. "His Honour but repeats the story as Amîn relates it. Of that I am a witness."

"Where are the Turkish soldiers who attend his Honour?"

"Where else but in the house?" replied Abdullah Shukri.

"Let them not show their faces, or we shall destroy them."

"O sheykh, for the love of Allah and the preservation of thy youth, consent to be a prisoner for a few hours!"

"Wallahi, never! I will not consent. Know all men present that it is against my will," proclaimed Bakîr, when the commotion had in part subsided. "Would you make me an accomplice of your guilt and folly? I am an official of the government, set here to guide you. That I shall do, so long as I remain at liberty. But if you force me, I cannot resist so great a multitude. Only bethink you of the punishment hereafter. Whichever prove the stronger—you or the Aïneynis—the government is stronger yet, and will prevail eventually. In thus constraining me, a servant of the government, you but increase the punishment of your misdeeds."

At that there was loud laughter, mixed with cries: "Reward and punishment are with the Highest! We will take the risk!" "The right is with his Honour. He submits, can you not see, O block-heads? He is only careful to secure his own retreat." "Wallahi, we must force him. Set the guard at once!"

"Do as you please," replied Bakîr contemptuously. "You are the stronger party." He kept exchanging glances with Abdullah Shukri.

"Praise be to Allah!" cried the crowd. "Our lord consents!"

"It is as well for him!" said a rough growling voice. "Had he refused, God knows I would have killed him as one kills a poison snake."

"Enough of insults!" said Abdullah Shukri. "Set your watch upon the house and go. We wish to sleep."

There ensued a great debate about the choice of sentries, while Bakîr and his attendant waited with longsuffering mien. At length five watchmen were appointed, each of them duly armed with knife and pistol. These squatted down beneath the porch and all the others streamed away into the night, not without words of farewell blessing on the house.

Bakîr then went indoors, Abdullah following.

"I am going to Aïneyn," he said when out of ear-shot of the warders.

"This night?" exclaimed Abdullah in alarm. "Think better of it, I beseech thee. All the people will be mad for vengeance against Deyr Amûn. They may forget the respect due to thee and kill us."

"My mind is fixed to go. Our people bluster, but I know them. It is fear of an attack that animates them more than courage. If I can dissuade the Aïneyn people from attacking, all may yet be well."

"They will surely kill thee," cried Abdullah disapprovingly, and other servants of the house en-

deavoured in like manner to deter their master; but the Sheykh Bakîr held to his purpose, saying—

“Well, let them kill me. It is no great matter.”

“In that case, no more words, by Allah! I go with thee,” cried his henchman with a laugh. “But how to get away! We are imprisoned.”

“Who are the guards?”

“Abdullah Latîf, Ferîd, Asad and another and the lad Selîm.

“Behave as if they were not in existence. Go, prepare the horses. I will deal with them.”

Abdullah then went out and talked politely with the guards a moment before proceeding to the stables as if in pursuance of his nightly duty. Bakîr put on his riding-boots and went out also, talking amiably with the guards until Abdullah called to say the steeds were ready. The jangle of their bits was heard out in the darkness.

“In your grace, I depart,” said Bakîr, rising. “The night is cool and pleasant, I am going forth to smell the air on horseback.”

“But thou art imprisoned; we are here to guard thee, O my lord,” exclaimed the chief man of the sentries in a deprecating way.

“By Allah, thou must not go forth, it is forbidden,” cried another.

“What words are these, O sons of dogs?” exclaimed Bakîr with sudden anger. Therewith he beat the nearest of them about the head and shoulders with his riding-whip till all howled for mercy.

They were still in tears, imploring him to be more reasonable, when, astride of his bay mare, he rode away into the darkness. They had pistols, he reminded them with mocking laugh.

"The lion," said Abdullah Shukri, "even though defenceless, is armed with all the fear of all the other lions that have gone before."

"Would to Allah that all creatures could be taught as easily. We have a hard task at Aïneyn," said Bakîr thoughtfully.

"Try not such methods there, for Allah's mercy!" laughed Abdullah. They could not see each other's faces in the darkness, but only the vague moving mass of horse and man. The mountain-side before them showed more lights than usual. A very lively murmur came from it. The blacksmith's forge was noisy as by day. People were calling one to another, and innumerable little drums were being beaten. There was to be little sleep that night for any one in Deyr Amûn.

"With thy permission," said Abdullah, "I will go and warn the Sitt Jemîleh. She has a mind. She will take measures for the lady's safety."

"By Allah, well considered. I had quite forgotten them. Go, with my blessing," said the Sheykh Bakîr. "I will ride on and wait for thee beside the mill."

XXX

THAT day, as it happened, Elsie had been out for a long ride with Mr. Fenn. On their return the latter had repaired to his own tents for supper, but afterwards rejoined her on the terrace underneath the pine-trees. Jemîleh sat at no great distance from them, with Fâris and the other servants of the house. After a blazing day the night air was delicious, and drew everybody out of doors. Jemîleh took part in the conversation of her group distractedly, with ears intent to catch each word that passed between the English lovers. As usual, they were on religion and the sad state of the country—subjects which Elsie, rendered languid by a long day's riding, approached for once without aggressive ardour. But the small khawâjah thought it necessary to explain exactly at what points he disagreed with her. And Elsie (naturally, as Jemîleh thought) became annoyed at his stupidity in treating her remarks as of importance when he might have wooed her.

"May Allah cut their lives, for they are devoid of sensibility!" exclaimed Jemîleh to herself as she looked round upon the friendly gloom gold-threaded with the dance of fireflies, and up at the great throbbing stars among the pine-boughs. "Is this a time to talk about the world's salvation?"

That their minds should have command at such a moment, which should have been controlled by heartbeats, shocked her like the revelation of a foul deformity. She, whose scheming and deceits, born of warm blood, they reprehended, beheld them guilty of a worse dishonesty, being false to nature. Their argument increased in bitterness as they proceeded.

"Well," said Elsie, "since you say that my ideas are hopeless, what, pray, is your idea of helping these unhappy people?"

"Supposing that I thought it right to interfere with them at all—supposing I could be quite sure that I myself, and my own nation, did not want improving quite as much as they do——"

"That's nonsense," interrupted Elsie. "You know quite well that they are far behind us."

"Behind, but not below."

"Below, as well."

"I'm not so sure. At least I cannot see that you or I have been appointed over them. . . . Well, supposing all I've said, I think that I should settle down among them and without any airs of superiority mix with them and help in little ways. A lot could be done in the direction of village government. The authority exists, but the people don't know how to use it. They could do heaps of things themselves for the improvement of the country, which they now wait for the government to do for them, and wait for ever! No government on earth could do all that is expected of the Turkish Government

without intelligent collaboration of the people. Then in the way of justice: a great deal can be done by settling small disputes at home without referring to the courts, which are always costly, often distant and in most cases corrupt. By working in those two directions, not to mention others, an English man or woman might do good."

"But you are leaving out the most important thing of all—I mean religion," put in Elsie hotly. "They can never make real progress while they have a false religion."

The small khawâjah was upon the point of saying something, but he checked himself—Jemîleh praised God for it—and uttered something else in tones of studied moderation. He observed—

"I don't think that you ought to aim at making proselytes. It only makes more bitterness between the two religions. The best thing that we Europeans have evolved in the course of centuries is the principle of religious toleration. El Islâm, as a religion, is tolerant. One could do good by reminding Muslims of the fact."

"How can you say such things!"

"It is the simple truth. I think you ought to study the Mahometan religion and its history a little more seriously than you appear to have done before presuming to attack it. The best thing for a missionary to do out here is to aim not at conversion, but at inspiring toleration. And the best mis-

sionary of my acquaintance thinks and says so. The converting business leads to awful things."

"I don't know what you mean, and I don't believe that you yourself know," answered Elsie, with contempt belied by vehemence. "If you had ever done any missionary work yourself, you would speak otherwise. These people like to hear about religion. From my own experience I can say, they welcome missionaries. I am sure that my small efforts at Aïneyn have not led to 'awful things' as you express it, nor to any feelings of intolerance."

"On the contrary, I should say that they have made more bitter feeling between Aïneyn and Deyr Amûn than there has ever been before. Do you know that the Christians here taunt everybody from Aïneyn with having to submit to what they call your 'insults'? They regard it as a triumph for their Christianity, which is not by any means a Christlike thing, I can assure you! I should not be surprised if we heard more of it!"

"The services at Aïneyn are given up, so you will not hear more of it. They were quite pleasant while they lasted; there was never the least trouble or disturbance. I really don't believe a half you say. At any rate you will admit that if the native Christians are intolerant, it is not my fault or that of any missionary."

Jemîleh heard no more of their discussion, her attention being called away by the arrival of Abdullah Shukri. Having left his horse below the ter-

race, he approached the group of servants in the darkness, asking in a whisper—"Where is the Sitt Jemîleh?"

"Here! Who is it?"

"It is I, Abdullah. I come to bring thee tidings of a great misfortune. This day there was a fight of children in the wady, a Muslim boy was killed most barbarously by our own young devils, may the Lord repay them! It is feared that vengeance will be taken. My lord is doing all that man can do to lessen danger; but it were well to keep thy mistress in the house to-morrow."

"Have no fear; to-morrow is the first day of the week. She never rides abroad upon that day.—Whither away, O Fâris?" asked Jemîleh, seeing her brother stepping off towards the stable.

"In there, to clean my gun," was the rejoinder.

"Warn the lady, notwithstanding," said Abdullah, "or better, tell the small kawâjah. He has sense."

"Sense?" sneered Jemîleh. "By the Cross, not he! He has been sitting in the dark with her for two whole hours and talking—politics."

"Merciful Allah!" laughed Abdullah. "A strange weakness!—which thou and I would never share, O queen of ardours!"

"Be silent, O devoid of modesty!" exclaimed Jemîleh.

She then approached the lovers and told Fenn in Arabic: "There is alarming news. Aïneyn at-

tacked some children of our village. A Muslim boy was killed by accident."

"What is it?" questioned Elsie.

"Excuse me half a minute, I will tell you presently." The small khawâjah went himself to find Abdullah Shukri. Having learnt from him the truth of the occurrence, he returned to Elsie and informed her of it. The event came in so aptly to support his recent arguments that she at first suspected him of having made it up.

"I don't believe a word of it," she told him. "I'm used to these alarms. Surely you, who claim to know these people thoroughly, don't credit all they tell you?"

"It all depends upon the teller and the tone," was the reply. "Abdullah Shukri and his master I should always trust, as I should also your man Fâris, to the best of his intelligence, which is not great." With that he took his leave, going to help the villagers in preparation for defence.

Word had gone forth that every man in Deyr Amûn who owned a gun must take it to the church to be inspected. The store of ammunition was examined; men and women set to work at making cartridges; great heaps of stone were raised in the main approaches to the village; and all night long the blacksmith's forge was glowing while the clang of hammered iron came from thence.

XXXI

IN the village of Aïneyn, meanwhile, there was the like excitement with less agitation and no noise. The prevailing sentiment was one of vast relief in the perception that the limit of endurance had at last been reached.

The Christians had grown rich while they (the Muslims) remained poor. The Christians were exempt from military service. From birth to death they governed their own lives and were at liberty to ply their trades or till their lands continuously; whereas the Muslim village was perpetually being robbed of able-bodied men. The Muslims had borne all the burden of the service of the State for the benefit of the said Christians, whom El Islâm of old agreed to tolerate and to protect in consideration of a yearly tribute paid by them. That had always been the way of El Islâm. The way of Christendom of old had been extermination. The Muslim as a conqueror had dealt more mercifully with the Christians of the conquered country than any Christian Power of those days would have dealt, counting them heretics. But were the Christians grateful? Ask your eyes! No sooner did the Europeans find a way into the land, seeking the destruction of the

Muslims stealthily, than the Christian populations flocked around them, eating all their dirt in order to secure protection from a foreign power, which should enable them to thrive at the expense of the poor Muslims.

On the one hand they whined lies to their protectors, filling their minds with prejudices against El Islâm; on the other, they grew arrogant towards their Muslim neighbours. Missionaries came and dwelt among them in their villages, which thus became mere outposts of the country's foes. They were educated free of charge; and placed in good positions. The least injustice to a Christian so enraged the Powers of Europe that all the masters of oppression in the land were driven to confine their practice to the poor Mahometans, who, being patriotic, raised no cry. The Sultan (God preserve him!) was too greatly pestered by the Powers of Europe, each clamouring on behalf of its own Christian favourites, to give attention to his loyal Muslim subjects. And so they had endured in silence. It needed more than that to make them break the peace.

To the people of Aïneyn the ravings of the Englishwoman had seemed no more than a part of the general injustice to which they had become accustomed, so long as they considered them the outcome of her private madness. But when they came to fancy that Deyr Amûn had egged her on to trouble them, the whole affair assumed another aspect. The

faith of El Islâm had been insulted publicly in the hearing of the lady's servants, native Christians. The boy, it was remembered, had been seen to grin. He and the girl, his sister, had doubtless reported the proceedings to the other Nazarenes, who triumphed in the shame of El Islâm.

Yet still the Muslims held their hands and waited, till that day, when frightened urchins brought the tidings that the son of Hâfiz esh-Shikari had been killed by Christian children in the wady. A search party went out at once, but could descry no traces of the body, not so much as a spot of blood upon the stones.

"They have carried him to their accursed church, to drink his blood and mutilate him at their leisure," said the father of the murdered boy, as one who states a fact of which no doubt remains. "In sh'Allah he was dead before they took him up. Mustafa saw them killing him with stones."

The headman still adjured the people to be calm. In pursuance of his duty he dispatched two messengers, one to the Wâli of the province, the other to the Sheykh Bakîr, but both were stopped before they had gone fifty yards and brought back to him with one word: "Forbidden." The sheykh smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and gave praise to Allah. Though he still spoke of peace, the friends of war met in his house that evening, and he it was who gave the most acclaimed advice—

"Attack them from above, that will surprise them."

"Then the army must set out betimes," remarked an elder. "It will take four hours at least to cross the wady at its head and climb the mountain. Another hour for coming down. Five hours at least without allowing rests."

"It can be done in less," a voice asserted.

"To-morrow is the First Day. They will go to church. Wait till they are all inside. Set five men at the door and burn the village."

"No, by Allah, they expect us, after what is done. They will not go to church to-morrow morning. Strike at dawn!"

The father of the murdered boy made no suggestion. He sat upon the ground with eyes downcast, contentedly employed in polishing a hunting-knife, which was the only weapon he possessed, for he was very poor. From time to time he called upon the name of Allah.

"Hush! People come!" exclaimed the watcher at the door.

"From which direction?" asked the sheykh.

"From Deyr Amûn."

The whole assembly sprang up in a trice and seized their weapons.

"Two riders only!" came from the look-out when weapons were laid down again. "It appears to be the Sheykh Bakîr—he and Abdullah Shukri. Shall I shoot, O sheykh?"

"By thy life, no, for they are honest men."

"Christians none the less. Better say shoot."

"No, let them enter, only tell them nothing!"

The company sat down once more. The countenances of its members lost their fierceness, becoming those of men ill-used, too mild to think on vengeance. Two saucer lamps set in the middle of the floor gave all the light there was in the large room. The faces thus illumined looked unreal; they seemed to flicker with the lamp-flames, each head-dress towering up into the shadows. All rose upon the entrance of the Sheykh Bakîr except the father of the murdered boy, who sat still, staring at the hunting-knife upon his knee.

The visitor had come, he said, to offer them his life as hostage that there should be justice.

"Allahu Akbar!" sighed the headman of Aïneyn. "Where in these days is justice found for true believers? No man should make his life a hostage for it, so take back thy words! Since the Franks throng on us, justice has become the slave of all the lies of all the Nazarenes, who wish to see the Franks destroy our country."

"I am not of those who wish to see a foreign government, as well thou knowest," said Bakîr with warmth. "I am a son of the Arabs, and have never felt the least desire to change my skin."

"Nevertheless your Honour is a Nazarene. You naturally side with your own people," said a young man present.

"Go and ask them!" answered Bakîr, with a short laugh. "By Allah, I have so angered my own people that they shut me in my house. I have escaped from prison, to come hither"; and he proceeded to recount the whole adventure, drawing chuckles even from that grim assembly.

"Now hear me to an end," he then continued. "You see now clearly that I am no partisan. I do not love the interference of the Franks, but I cannot prevent it. If you, being Muslims, attack Christians, whether right or wrong, the Franks will make an outcry and increase their interference; whereas if you keep quiet, as the law enjoins, I swear by Allah justice shall be done to you. That is my last word. In your grace I go."

"How should we be suspected of a desire to break the law—we, who are much more loyal than the Nazarene?" inquired an elder of Aïneyn, with great demureness.

"I am a Muslim and resign my cause to God," moaned the father of the murdered boy. "Let them at least give back the body of my child that I may bury it."

At that a very angry murmur filled the room.

"Aye, by Allah! give us back the body. Let us behold the body of the martyr child!"

"The body will be given to you when it is discovered," said Bakîr. "Doubtless the criminals have hidden it, for it has not been found. I did not hear the news till near the sunset. One man I

caused to be arrested instantly. The others I will seize to-morrow, if God wills it. To-morrow you shall seek the body with me."

"Dost thou think the other Nazarenes will let us see it? They will soak the corpse in oil and burn it sooner," cried a voice.

"Ottoman troops from the city will be here to-morrow to see justice done. What say you to my offer?" asked the Sheykh Bakîr.

"Neither 'yes' nor 'no,' but 'What God wills comes to pass,'" replied the headman of Aïneyn. "But this I say for thee, O Sheykh Bakîr. There is not a Nazarene in the land beside thee who would have come into our midst to-night with such an errand."

"A lie, O sheykh! Another sits out there beside the threshold."

"He does not count, he is thy shadow!" laughed the headman. "Allah knows, his soul is in thy body."

Amid such pleasantry Bakîr departed. He had come to Aïneyn upon a reckless impulse born of his lazy fear of too much work; aware that there was danger, but not heeding it. He would, in truth, if questioned in his heart, have owned that he preferred a sudden violent death to the great weight of public business, writing letters and reports, which would devolve on him as the result of any serious outbreak. He had done no harm by coming. Allah alone knew if he had done any good.

Outside the village he reined in his horse and lit

a cigarette, increasing the darkness. Abdullah Shukri still rode on towards Deyr Amûn.

“Not that way, towards the city rather!” cried Bakîr.

“To hear is to obey,” replied Abdullah Shukri, and he turned his horse about.

A short hour after they had left the headman’s house, the main body of the Aïneyn men set out on their long march. The remainder were to start an hour before the dawn, their business being to strike upwards by the shortest road. Messengers had been dispatched to other Muslim villages, inviting help in the good work; for Deyr Amûn was to be treated as men treat a wasps’ nest.

XXXII

JEMÎLEH was awakened before sunrise by a noise of screaming, monotonous and hopeless as the yell of wounded beasts. Leaping out of bed, she ran to the window. A crowd of women, half-undressed, with children clinging to their skirts, was on the terrace; its leaders beat upon the house door; all were wailing. Each minute added to the throng of fugitives. The deep church bell was ringing with a mad insistence. From the same direction came the sound of firing.

Jemîleh ran down in her nightdress and unbolted the great door. Had she not sprung aside immediately she must inevitably have been knocked down and trampled by the panic-stricken women, who then rushed in headlong, fighting one another, dragging children, some of whom were hurt and bleeding. In a minute the whole lower storey of the house was full of them. They flung themselves upon the chairs and couches, strewed the floor; all wild-eyed, all dishevelled, giving utterance to piercing howls.

“El Islâm—O Holy Jesus!—El Islâm is on us! Shut the door, O Sitt Jemîleh! For the love of Allah, shut the door!” the cry arose. But others still came running up the terrace with chin on shoulder, although no one followed.

Having shut the door at length and fastened it, Jemîleh was picking her way through the mob, thinking to go up and explain the meaning of the din to Elsie, when Elsie herself appeared among them, pale and scared. Jemîleh saw her lips open and shut, but could not hear what she was saying for the women's clamour. She led her to a place where they could hear each other speak, and then informed her—

“The Muslims massacre the beebles. We'd best but ub the English flag to make us safe.”

Elsie had not a word. They went together to the box-room and unpacked a large Union Jack which had been a present to Miss Wilding from the British Consul when first he heard that she was going to live at Deyr Amûn.

“You'll find it useful in this country, where it's still respected, although at present you may feel disposed to cut yourself adrift,” had been his speech on the occasion. She heard him now as in a dream, while she unfolded it.

Most of the house was covered by a sloping roof of tiles, but at each end there was a wing with a flat roof some ten foot square, accessible by a ladder and trap-door. On one of these flat roofs was set a flagstaff. As they were stringing up the Union Jack, Jemîleh crouching in her fear of bullets, the noise of shouts and firing came to them distinctly, together with the rapid clang of the church bell. At length their eyes grew bold enough to gaze around,

and they realized that the battle was a good way off, up by the church.

The sun had touched the heights beyond the wady, but Deyr Amûn still lay in dewy shadow. A cool breeze was astir, shedding abroad the fragrance of the orchards. The stems and boughs of olive-trees were black, their leaves a whitish mist; the fig-branches smoke-grey with inky leaves; plums, apricots and mulberries made a mass of green in which the cube-shaped houses seemed embedded like small rocks in seaweed. Down in the hollows fluttered plumes of reeds. Doves were cooing plaintively, as yet but half awake. The scene was wonderfully peaceful save at that one point by the church, where there were flashes followed by sharp detonations and slow puffs of smoke. Up there a fierce fight seemed to be in progress, for the noise was ceaseless.

All at once smoke rose from a point further down the hill. It went up first in threads, swayed lightly by the breeze. The threads became a column. Flames were seen. Some of the enemy, eluding the defenders, had set a house on fire. To deal with them men were detached from the main body round the church. The girls could see them streaming down the terraces, like ants. Before they reached the scene of the conflagration smoke had begun to rise in two more places. The watchers heard the angry shouts when this was seen.

"I wonder where they're making for," said Elsie

in a tone of placid curiosity which angered poor Jemîleh so that she exclaimed—

“They make for you, I think. They burn this house, and kill the beebles in it. You are the cause of all in their obinion.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean you did annoy those beebles, telling them their religion was all silliness. They did not mind from you. They thought you did not know what you were saying. But the beebles here in Deyr Amûn, they laugh like anything and tease the Muslims with it. That’s what makes them fight.”

“I don’t believe it for a moment.”

“Well, you’ll see. They’re coming here. The flag may save us all, I bray to God.”

Just then, as if on purpose to confirm Jemîleh’s forecast, shots were fired much nearer to them, though still upon the far side of the glen which lay between their eminence and the bold spur on which the church and village stood. They saw white smoke dispersing through the trunks of olive trees. Jemîleh flung herself on Elsie, moaning—

“Let us go indoors! My brother is down there, I know. Ah! Ah! I feel quite sick. Make haste! Go down!”

But Elsie stayed, exclaiming in excited tones, “Oh, look! Here’s some one coming. It is Mr. Fenn!” and in a flash Jemîleh realized that the inhuman girl thought nothing of the slaughter in the village, or the wrong to Christendom, compared with

the appearance of the lover she had used so badly. Casting an angry glance in the direction indicated, she beheld the white-clad Englishman, armed with nothing more effective than a walking-stick, advancing up the path with easy stride, showing the same indifference which Elsie felt for the disaster threatening poor Christian people.

Their wicked coldness made Jemîleh cry. "Nobody cares for the boor beeble," she exclaimed with sobs. "They will all be killed and efry one look on and smile. Oh, for the luf of God, Miss Elsie, do come down. We shall be shot ub here."

"He's coming here! . . . I think we ought to hold our morning service earlier to-day. It may bring comfort to those poor scared things indoors."

"Holy Mother of God!" groaned poor Jemîleh in her heart. "These English will hold services in Hell."

They went downstairs at length, just as the sun appeared above the mountain-top, in time to welcome Mr. Fenn, who brought them tidings of the fight. He had been awakened by the noise of it so near his tent and, seeing what was happening, had sallied forth to have a look before he dressed himself. As soon as he was dressed he had come down to them. His servant was to follow by another way, bringing two guns and thirty rounds of ammunition—all he had.

"I don't suppose you have a gun upon the premises," he said to Elsie.

"Fâris and his father both have guns, I think," she answered vaguely.

"And where are Fâris and his father at this moment? Tell me that! Nowhere within call, I'm prepared to bet. Our friend Bakîr, it seems, escaped last night. They thought they had imprisoned him. He will have warned the government, so there is a chance of troops arriving any minute."

"Oh, my goodness!" shrieked Jemîleh. "The Turks will come, you say? Then efrybody in the fillage will be massacred."

"Don't be a fool," rejoined the small khawâjah angrily. He added in his former tone: "It's a fair fight, so far, though I'm glad that we've got all the women and children safely here or in the church. And Deyr Amûn has still the best of it in my opinion. Though very hotly attacked, they have not been dislodged from any of the points they held in force—the church, for instance, and the sheykh's house and the spring. Some of the enemy got round them, but are now below and manifestly at a disadvantage if they wish to climb again, as climb they must. Numbers must tell in the end, if they avoid a panic, and from what I saw our people much outnumber the attacking parties. My one fear is that they will make for us in force. I don't think they would venture in with the flag flying, though Heaven knows they might, they're pretty mad. But they'd pepper us with bullets through the windows. Now get out all the mattresses, pillows, blankets and

cushions that you've got. Show me where you keep them and I'll help. We've got to make these windows bullet-proof as near as possible. I wish those women would stop howling . . . Do what I tell you and look sharp about it. We may not have much time."

Elsie showed great surprise at this peremptory tone. She raised her eyebrows and pursed up her mouth. Had he so much as looked at her just then she would have quarrelled, thought Jemîleh, who knew all the symptoms; but, as it happened, he paid no attention to her, having begun to try and pacify the wretched fugitives. So after a minute's hesitation Elsie went off with Jemîleh to perform his bidding. While he was arranging the mattresses and cushions, which they brought to him, upon the window-sills, he said—

"And now, if you've got nothing else to do, cut up a few sheets into lengths for bandaging. We're sure to need them presently. And make these women help, instead of yelling."

Elsie started and her cheeks went red as fire, but again after a second's hesitation she did as she was told.

About an hour later, having arranged a plan of defence with his servant (a Muslim from another district) who had brought the guns, Fenn burst into the room where Elsie and Jemîleh, with a dozen of the village women, were sitting on the floor pre-

paring bandages, and asked: "Have you a practicable roof? I want to take a look at the position." By then the noise of firing had drawn very near.

Elsie sprang up obediently, shaking out shreds of linen from her lap, and led him up on to the terrace where the flag was flying. Jemîleh and the village women followed, to be near those calm ones. The day was already hot. When their eyes had become accustomed to the sun-glare, Elsie and Jemîleh saw the battle much more widely scattered than it had been when they last surveyed it. There was still some desultory firing round the church, but the main struggle had been carried further downward and all the upper portion of the village seemed on fire. About a score of Muslims were across the glen and had taken cover among the olive-trees upon a terrace not a hundred yards below the Englishwoman's house. Some men of Deyr Amûn had got above them, and running with heads ducked from point to point, were holding them for the time being, the Muslims being at a disadvantage until reinforced. A crash of boulders loosed from the walls told that the Christians were not wasting powder where a stone might serve.

Fenn turned to Elsie with the question—

"Have you got such a thing as a pair of field-glasses?"

Jemîleh, at the bidding of her mistress, fetched the instrument required. The small khawâjah,

after peering through it for a minute, gave a long, low whistle.

“What is it?” questioned Elsie.

“Things look bad for Deyr Amûn.”

Jemîleh fell upon her knees in silent prayer.

XXXIII

THE Deyr Amûn men had been driven back from two of their positions, and the need to guard the church, where some of the women and children had sought refuge, in strength, prevented reinforcement of the beaten bands. These could be seen pouring down the hillside to the glen, turning to fire at intervals. They were evidently making for Miss Wilding's house, whose situation was convenient for defence. But near the bottom they were intercepted by a band of Muslims running in the hollow. In a few minutes the victorious Aïneynis would be rushing up to help their comrades storm the house, or so it seemed to Fenn as he looked down upon the struggle. The village women and Jemîleh sobbed and prayed, some of them on their knees, some prostrate on the roof. One of them kissed the Union Jack, which hung in heavy folds along the staff, addressing prayers to it as to an icon. Elsie stood beside the small khawâjah, pale but calm.

The latter suddenly exclaimed: "Thank God!" and handed her the glasses. On a curve of the broad mule-track round a hill of olives, row upon row of horsemen could be seen advancing at the gallop. The sunlight flashed on their accoutrements.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Miss Wilding in her turn. "It is the Turkish troops."

At those words Jemîleh gave a howl of terror. "Then we are finished," she exclaimed in Arabic. "O Allah, pity! In mercy, O khawâjah, slay us now!" The fugitives began again to scream like wild beasts.

The small khawâjah glanced at them and shrugged contempt. He directed Elsie's gaze up to the church, where other Turkish soldiers—infantry—could now be seen. The noise of fighting ceased in that direction. The cavalry, which for a time had vanished in an undulation of the mountain-side, appeared again, this time upon the path which led from the main road to Elsie's house. At its approach the Muslims in the glen retreated hastily, the Christians struggled up the slope to help their comrades fighting on the terraces.

"They let the Muslimîn escape, of course!" exclaimed Jemîleh bitterly.

"I think the danger's over," said the small khawâjah, turning to Elsie with a smile of great relief. Firing had ceased on all the further slopes, and Turkish soldiers could be seen at work upon the fires.

Jemîleh wrung her hands, exclaiming—

"They'll rob the houses, nothing will be left!"

"There's nothing left to rob," said Fenn impatiently. "Those houses have been burning for two hours. And these are not the kind of soldiers who

do mischief. These fellows coming here are all picked men—the Wâli's own Circassians." Suddenly he cried out, "Look!" and added with conviction, "No one will dare to loot a stick to-day."

Behind the troop of cavalry, at the distance necessary to avoid their dust, came a white-bearded man on horseback, clad in black frock coat and scarlet fez, his trousers, accurately creased, held down by straps. He carried in one hand a sunshade, and with the other easily controlled the antics of a coal-black charger. He was attended by a gorgeous aide-de-camp and by the Sheykh Bakîr, who rode a horse's length behind him upon either hand. It was the Governor.

The soldiers halted in the glen till he rode up. There was a moment's council. Half the men dismounted and unslung their carbines, moving along a terrace towards the fight, which still continued just below the Englishwoman's house. The rest with all the horses rode on to the house itself. The Wâli, parasol and all, went with the former party, merely putting down his sunshade, which might easily have got entangled in the branches of the trees. The soldiers fired one volley in the air. The Wâli's horse plunged wildly for a moment and then he rode it coolly in between the combatants, the Sheykh Bakîr and the gay aide-de-camp supporting him.

A Christian fired a shot, perhaps by accident. The old man took no notice. He appeared to be rebuking the delinquents as a father might. His ges-

tures spoke benevolence. Two men of either faction were arrested and disarmed. The fight was over.

Five minutes later Hasan Pasha rode up to the house. Elsie herself went out to speak to him. She begged him to come in and take refreshment. But he answered—

“No, I must not stay a minute, having much to do. I do but come to seek assurance of your health, and to express my hope that you have not been much alarmed by these events. My daughter will be very anxious upon your account. In all her letters she seeks news of you. I also wish to ask you, as a favour, to allow the men who have been badly wounded to be brought to you. You are a charitable lady, you will not deny them. And no one else in the whole village, I am sure, knows how to treat them.”

All at once as he was speaking he caught sight of the refugee women crowding the passage behind Elsie for a glimpse of him, with hateful eyes.

“Ha!” he exclaimed, “so you have given shelter to the women and the children. You are good. But kindly send them to their homes, now all is over. I cannot send a wounded Mussulman to you while they remain. It would be murder.”

And he rode away.

The Sheykh Bakîr, who stayed behind a minute, said: “He’s right, by Jingo! The old boy knows what he’s about. Send them away . . . I’m fery

glad to see you well, my dear. I feared tremendous that we might not be in time. Now I must go and helb clean ub the mess."

But when Elsie told those women to return to their own houses they fell into a panic, shrieking, yelling and clutching at her dress with eager hands like claws. Not while the soldiers were there! The soldiers would first ravish and then kill them! The wicked Pasha had no less than that in mind when he suggested their ejection from the house. He was a devil, so were all the Muslims.

Fenn it was at length who solved the difficulty by a compromise, which was that they should leave the house itself, but remain close by upon the terrace till the soldiers went away. The rooms had not been altogether cleared of them before the first instalment of the wounded was brought in by soldiers. The Pasha sent a note to the effect that the casualties were greater than he had expected, and, since he could not trust the Muslim wounded in any native house at Deyr Amûn, he was sending them all to Miss Wilding, confiding in her charity at least to let them die in peace.

The only Christians who were brought into the house were those who had been wounded in the skirmish close at hand. Among these was Fâris. When Jemîleh saw her brother dead to all appearance, with blood upon his face, she became of no more use for any kind of service; she could only sit upon the ground beside his couch, and weep and pray and

curse the wicked Muslims. Bedding was commandeered from all the village and brought in by the smiling, indefatigable Turkish soldiers. About mid-day, to Elsie's great relief, Dr. Wilson came with his assistant and two proper nurses; also the Khawâjah Yûsuf in high perspiration, who explained his presence at great length to Fenn and Elsie while the doctor worked. Men's hearts were opened in an hour of such disaster, opened to receive "the Gospel light," "the liffin' water." He hoped to bring comfort to "boor sinful souls" and seemed to take a tranquil pleasure in the horrid scene, as illustrating the old adage, "In the midst of life we are in death"—words which he kept repeating with immense complacency.

The coming of the doctor was soon widely known, and people came to summon him in all directions. About one o'clock Hasan Pasha rode up with his aide-de-camp and asked to speak with him alone a minute. The interview took place upstairs in Elsie's sitting-room. Then the Pasha left the house, mounted his horse with the assistance of his aide-de-camp and rode away.

"He's had a bullet through his arm; the bone is splintered," the doctor said to Fenn and Elsie, who were talking in the doorway. "It must be agony, but he won't let me put it up for him, because he doesn't wish it to be known that he is hurt. He thinks that it would cause fresh trouble, and he may be right. He's going to hold a sort of session of

inquiry now, and wants you, Fenn, to join him later on. Bakîr will fetch you. I've done what I can to ease the pain for him, but I don't know what state I shall find that arm in by this evening."

"He is brave!" said Elsie.

"A real old lion, as the natives call him," murmured Fenn.

"About as wicked as they make 'em, if report speaks true. . But one can't help respecting him," subjoined the doctor.

Jemîleh, who had come to ask if something more could not be done for Fâris, her one care, happened to overhear this conversation and gave praise to God. This Muslim who bore rule over the Christians, who gave himself as grand airs as a Frank, who dared to sit in judgment upon Christians and speak to them as people speak to dogs, was wounded—please God by a Christian!—and in pain. Her chance admission to the secret seemed a heavenly favour.

"Two," was the first word Fâris uttered in his sister's hearing. "I know that I shot two at least of them before I fell. Then, as I lay upon the ground, I saw the soldiers coming just when we were reinforced and on the point of winning. I knew that they would rob us of the victory. I saw that father of iniquity, the chief oppressor, ride up as calm as cruelty. My gun was loaded. Lying on the ground, I aimed at him and fired, but missed him. Allah knows my grief!"

“Grieve not! Thou didst not miss him, O my dear,” Jemîleh whispered as she kissed the sufferer’s brow. “Thy bullet broke his arm, the praise to Allah! I heard the doctor say so even now—— Now, for the love of Allah, speak no more, but rest.”

XXXIV

THE house of the sheykh of the village had escaped destruction, though some of the adjacent buildings were but blackened ruins, over which the sunlit leaves of mulberry and pomegranate trees triumphed like garlands placed upon a grinning skull. The level space before it was as busy as a city square when Fenn, conducted by the Sheykh Bakîr, approached it about three o'clock. Horses were tethered round the walls. Soldiers came and went continually, pushing through the crowd of villagers, some wounded, all dishevelled, who stood like frightened sheep and gazed upon the house which for the moment had become the seat of the provincial government. Except for the occasional squeal and plunge of a stallion, and a tremulous wail from women in the crowd, the scene was strangely silent.

"They repent now of their madness," said the Sheykh Bakîr to his companion. "They clutch at me and beg my intercession. They fear the presence of the Wâli more than death. The sky will fall, they think, now he is come. God knows how they misjudge him! My father used to pray: 'God send a Turk in an emergency,' and I shall pray the same from this day forward; for far from seeking to take

vengeance, as our people think, the Wâli's one thought is for lasting peace between the villagers. The difficulty lies in this: The Muslimîn possess no certain knowledge of the murder yesterday. They clamour for the body of the child. We have in custody Amîn the murderer, who knows exactly where that body is. The Wâli would not have the body found, desiring as he does a lasting peace. But our people, having made a pretty legend of the murder, demand to hear the witness of the said Amîn, believing that it will confirm their innocence. The Wâli gave them precedence in pleading, and they have been asking for Amîn for two whole hours. Now we are going to hear the Muslim case. It is for that your presence is required, since it concerns our lady. God grant us patience, for these fellâhîn make many words."

While speaking, Bakîr had forced his way through the crowd. A soldier, issuing from the house, exchanged a word with him.

"Amîn is called at last," he said to Fenn.

The sentry at the door saluted, and they passed into a long dim room—silent save for the murmur of a single voice which spoke continuously. As Fenn's eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, he saw the speaker, an old man with head bandaged. It was the headman of Aïneyn, and he was telling the whole story of Miss Wilding's persecutions in the low, even tone which Muslims deem respectful. When he ceased there was a dead silence in the room

for several heartbeats till the Wâli asked his clerk:

"Is that all written?"

"Written, efendim."

Hasan Pasha sat in an armchair upon the dais, the secretary near him at a little table. Sounds floated in through door and windows—the scream and stamp of horses, murmurs of the crowd, the grating song of the cicadas and the hum of bees. The Wâli seemed to be asleep, so still he was. At length he spoke again to his secretary, who stepped delicately down the room and fetched the Englishman, for whom a chair was set upon the dais. On one side of the long hall sat the Deyr Amûni chiefs, upon the other the Aïneyni. Most of them were wounded or had blood upon them. Their bearing now was that of timid children.

"You heard what the sheykh of Aïneyn said, did you not, monsieur?" the Wâli asked of Fenn, when he had taken seat. "It was for that particularly that I wished you to be present. You are a friend of the demoiselle and can inform her gently of the harm which she has done all unintentionally. You will be able also to inform the other English. I would have it known. Excuse me now; I must conclude this business."

He seemed to struggle with a growing torpor.

"You deserve the utmost punishment," he remarked quietly; "both you of Deyr Amûn, and you of Aïneyn. And, by Allah, you shall both be punished very heavily unless you become reconciled here

in my presence, now, immediately. There has been enough of bloodshed for no reason. Be ashamed, both parties of you, and forsake this madness. Well, what say you?"

"May it please your Excellency," said the headman of Aïneyn. "The reason of our rage was not the Englishwoman's teaching—no, by Allah!—but the murder of the child which took place yesterday. We are willing to forego both the blood-money and vengeance, but the body we would have for proper burial. That is an easy and a just demand. When that is done, we will be reconciled." A murmur of approval came from that side of the room.

"What say you others?" Hasan Pasha turned to Deyr Amûn.

Antun, the priest, who had his arm in a sling, made answer in a grumbling tone.

"O Excellency, how can we give back that which we do not possess? We know not where the body is, nor have we any knowledge of the child in question."

Another murmured: "By the Truth, there was no killing. The boy fell down and killed himself upon a stone. It was from Allah. Our boys were terrified and ran away. The body will be lying in the wady where they left it, unless the boy recovered, which is very likely. Amîn the murderer saw all that passed. He can inform your Excellency."

"Aye, hear Amîn the murderer," was murmured generally.

"Is he yet here?" asked Hasan Pasha of his secretary, who went out straightway to inquire; and presently Amîn was brought in by two soldiers. He stood before the dais with downcast eyes.

"Listen, O Amîn," the Pasha said to him. "What was the case of the boy who perished yesterday down in the wady? Tell me exactly how his death befell."

Amîn gave a great gulp or two and then said huskily—

"The Muslims were on our side of the stream. Our children met them and they fought together. I saw them from my field where I was working. The Muslims fled at last, but one was left behind. He had fallen in the battle and seemed stunned. Our children took great stones"—he raised both hands above his head—"and dashed them down on him—boum! boum!—like that. I cried to them to stop for Allah's sake. I ran down from my field to punish them, but by the time I reached the bottom of the wady he was dead."

A groan came from the people of Aïneyn.

"What happened after that?" inquired the Pasha.

"I helped them make a hole and bury him."

"And thou couldst find the body at this moment?"

"Aye, by Allah!"

"That is enough. Remove the witness. . . . Now what say you to this, O men of Deyr Amûn?"

"We say that it is a lie," replied the priest with more of vehemence than any one had yet used in the Wâli's presence. "It is my duty to inform your

Excellency that this man Amîn is a notorious malefactor, the worst of all the village, and untrustworthy."

"May Allah cut thy life, O Antun, for this treason!" cried Amîn, who overheard this speech from near the doorway. "Thou knowest how I ever strove after the good, and never did the evil but against my will."

"Silence!" enjoined a soldier at the door.

"I have tried to reason with you," said the Wâli, leaning back with eyes closed, "but it proves in vain. Now hear my judgment, all of you. Soldiers are going to exhume the body of the child, and the sheykh of Deyr Amûn and two of the elders of that village will attend them. Then the soldiers will convey the body to Aïneyn and place it in the cemetery there. The representatives of Deyr Amûn will go no further than their village boundary, where the representatives of Aïneyn will meet them and receive the body at their hands. This is my award to Aïneyn. On the other hand, for the attack on Deyr Amûn, contrary to law, and for the damage done to property, Aïneyn is mulcted in the sum of 10,000 piastres to be paid immediately, and in whatever further sum may be judged necessary by the court of arbitration to be formed hereafter. The provocation will be weighed and taken into due account, and neither party will, I think, have cause to triumph. There has been enough of suffering to-day, it seems to me, and so I shall not punish individuals.

But if the trouble is renewed I shall hang ten of either party. Be reconciled. That will be best for everybody."

The Wâli then uprose, the whole room with him. He clutched Fenn's arm and muttered through clenched teeth: "You have a tent here, have you not, monsieur? Let me rest there for half-an-hour, and bring the English doctor to me. I cannot mount my horse without assistance. Let me walk with you."

An angry murmur could be heard without.

"They think I have shown favour to the Mussulmans," the Wâli sighed, "in ordering the body of the child to be conveyed by soldiers—a great honour! God knows I did it only to prevent the people of Aïneyn from gazing on the body."

As he issued from the house, dead silence fell. His horse stood ready in a soldier's charge. He told the man to ride it to Miss Wilding's house and call the English doctor to the tents behind the church; then moved off slowly, leaning on Fenn's arm. His aide-de-camp, in evident anxiety, walked on his other side and gave support, when needed, unobtrusively. They had but half-a-mile to go, and were already in sight of the tents, when a shot was fired so close to them that the report was deafening. As Fenn recovered from surprise, he saw a little cloud of smoke dispersing by a terrace wall, and the aide-de-camp scrambling up towards it furiously.

"Come back!" the Wâli cried. "It is nothing. Only my fez this time, the praise to Allah!"

"I see you have been startled by that incident," he said to Fenn a little later, after Dr. Wilson had attended to his wounded arm. "For me it is quite banal. It is difficult for one of us to realize the life of Englishmen—always secure, always at peace."

The Sheykh Bakîr came in to say that all was well. The body of the murdered child had been exhumed in presence of the sheykh of Deyr Amûn, the priest and other elders, who had had the grace to show some horror and throw dust upon their faces. He had seen it placed in a stout coffin and covered with a decent pall. The soldiers had their orders to take care that no one of Aïneyn got sight of it.

"Good," said the Wâli, rising to take leave. He mounted with assistance from Bakîr and rode away towards the headman's house. A minute after, bugles sounded, rousing all the echoes of the mountain-side. The soldiers were departing, all but half a company detailed to do the bidding of the Sheykh Bakîr.

Fenn walked back with the doctor to Miss Wilding's house. The glow of sunset was upon the burnt-out houses. The frogs were noisy in the garden tanks. The doves belonging to the church were cooing tenderly. Family groups were searching in the ruins. From houses which had been uninjured came the sounds of wailing. Dr. Wilson talked despond-

ently about the damage done, but Fenn was thinking only of the Wâli. Never in all his lifetime had he met a man who impressed him as so lonely yet preserved both wit and courage. As he considered all that the old man had borne that day, a great and righteous anger against Elsie filled his heart, without at all diminishing his love for her. He meant to tell her plainly what he thought about her conduct, but when he reached the house Fâris informed him that the lady's aunt had arrived from the city, also the English Consul, also certain missionaries; and that, what with the wounded occupying all the downstairs rooms, and what with these unlooked-for visitors, Jemîleh and the Sitt were at their wits' end. On hearing this Fenn went away again, and on the morrow he forgot his purpose to be disagreeable.

XXXV

ELSIE heard compliments from the missionaries upon her presence of mind during the battle, as shown in preparations to defend the house and excellent arrangements for the wounded; and she felt humiliated, for the compliments were undeserved. Everything for which they praised her was the work of Mr. Fenn. The pandemonium of the screaming women in the house, the horror of the fight outside, had quite unnerved her until he appeared upon the scene. How could she care for anybody who despised her? She wished that he would go away; but he remained, and justified his presence by continued usefulness. There was another reason why she felt humiliated by the praise which she received. It was given with a certain air of generosity, as if the speakers, anxious to be kind, were glad to meet with something she had done which could be praised wholeheartedly.

Dr. Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. Edison, Mr. Jones. Miss Jane Berenger and an English nurse from the hospital were staying in the house uncomfortably, while the Khawâjah Yûsuf and the doctor's assistant had a lodging in the village, but came in for meals; nor could Elsie see much hope of getting rid of

these invaders so long as there were thirty wounded Muslims to be nursed and prayed for. She was friendly in her speech to them, however, reserving all her bitterness for Fenn, while giving him no time for argument or explanation. Jemîleh longed to lock them up together in one room. If she went on like this, Elsie would drive the man away with the impression that she hated him—a horrid prospect for Jemîleh, who saw herself bound for life to a dangerous lunatic, since she knew that she would never have the courage to destroy the amiable image of herself in Elsie's eyes.

On the evening of the fight, the English Consul had spoken to Miss Wilding seriously in the presence of her aunt.

"If you'll take my advice," he had said, "you'll wait a little while to save appearances, and then go home to England."

He paced the floor of Elsie's boudoir, now the only sitting-room, the hall and all the rooms downstairs adjoining it being given over to the uses of a temporary hospital.

"But how about my work?" said the girl miserably. "I feel some responsibility towards the people here. I have raised their expectations, made them think I should go on with it."

No sooner had she said the words than she regretted them.

The Consul shrugged: "What is your work exactly?" and she had no answer. She would not in-

vite ridicule by mentioning the little class of girls assembled by Jemîleh at uncertain hours and inspected by herself when she felt in the mood; the Sunday meetings and her little "talks" to those who came to them. The dispensary was something, but it was not hers. Her going would not injure it at all.

"You must not be too hard on Elsie," murmured Miss Jane Berenger, touched by her niece's crest-fallen appearance. "She did not know the hidden forces that she had to deal with."

"Like a child at play with matches near a cask of gunpowder!" the Consul flashed. "The child is not to blame, save only in so far as it is disobedient. No child should ever be allowed to play near gunpowder. She must go back to England."

Elsie flushed as at a slap in the face.

"I shall not obey you," she cried out indignantly. "What right have you to speak to me like that? And does not all this trouble only show the need these people have of civilizing and refining influences? I am more than ever convinced that there is work to be done here—work which nobody is doing yet—although I may have failed at first through ignorance. Now that I have bought experience, I shall try again in quite a different way."

"Well, do it somewhere else! I don't care where you go, so long as it is outside my responsibility. I imagine that Hasan Pasha feels the same. Forgive my speaking bluntly," said the Consul.

"Why do you throw the blame for all that has happened upon me?" asked Elsie, very near to tears.

"I'll tell you why. I'd meant to spare you that, but since you ask for it expressly, you shall have it. Do you know that the body of the little boy these people murdered was mutilated in a horrid and disgusting way? No, I thought not. It will be hushed up by the Wâli's orders. Fenn knows, but he won't tell you, having regard for your precious feelings. That murder was the immediate cause of the attack on Deyr Amûn. It happened in this way. Some Christian boys taunted some Muslim boys with the helplessness of their parents under your insults—that's what both parties consider your sermons to have been: insults to the Mahometan religion—taunted them with their impotence against the English who are Christians, the English who take care of Deyr Amûn because you live here. The sheykh of the village, when he heard about the murder, dispatched a messenger to me, quite coolly asking for protection. So you see now that your—'work' I think you called it—really caused the state of things we all deplore."

"I think you most unfair," said Elsie, going to the window, whence through the mist of tears she had a glimpse of Mr. Fenn conversing with the Sheykh Bakîr upon the terrace in the evening light. Desiring above all things some one to support her with whole-hearted admiration, the sight of him just

then increased her wretchedness. He would agree with every word the Consul said.

"It seems to me my presence here has been some use. The wounded . . . "

"If you'd only kept to work of that sort and put theology behind you!" cried the Consul.

"I shall keep to work of that sort in the future. But how can one put religion in the background? It is the chief thing."

"It was not meant to be a club with which to bash one's neighbours, but an inward guide to make one love them, I imagine," was the dry reply.

Her aunt was very sympathetic afterwards; but Elsie felt the pity in her sympathy—a pity born of reprehension—and made no response to it. She fled for comfort to Jemîleh, spending hours alone with her, recounting all the Consul's words with a self-justifying commentary.

"I exbect the Wâli worried him and made him cross," Jemîleh soothed her. "I do not know what-effer I should do, Miss Elsie, if you left this country."

"I don't see why I should," said Elsie hotly. "And I certainly don't want to part from you, Jemîleh. We might go to some other place outside his district, and start our work afresh on better lines. One thing I have learnt from all this trouble, and that is that the Muslims need us far more than the Christians. We could live in some Muslim centre and begin by doing education work or nursing."

Had Jemîleh's real opinion of the prospect thus held out to her governed her behaviour in the least degree, she would then and there have sprung up and denounced her mistress as a maniac, washing her hands of her and all her doings. But what she feigned to be she was, in conscious moments. She could not feign to be a wicked or unpleasant person. If occasionally she appeared in such a rôle, it was only at some moment when she was not thinking.

"I am afraid you would be fery lonely, just with only me, no English beebble," was all her comment on the mad proposal.

"My one wish is to get away from English people. You see how they behave to me! I have no friends but you."

"There's Mr. Fenn. He lufs you fery much indeed."

"He!—I think he hates me!" answered Elsie, with a sob-like laugh.

"Oh, no. He lufs you, I am sure!" Jemîleh pleaded.

"Well, that's what I think of doing," Elsie sighed. "We must talk it out together, and choose where to go."

Jemîleh was exceedingly alarmed. Her heart beat in her brain with apprehension. Yet she pretended a delighted acquiescence until left alone, when she rushed out to speak a word to the priest Antun.

He was squatting by the church wall with a group of elders when she came upon him; and in presence

of them all she asked his counsel, exclaiming, not without a touch of impudence—

“I have a problem for thee, O our father. There is the Sitt and there is the small khawâjah, close together yet so far apart. They love each other yet they quarrel daily. She eludes him, will not let him finish speaking. Would it be a sin for me to bring them into marriage by guile or, as it were, by violence?”

“Say what is in thy mind,” said Antun, puzzled.

“I mean to lock them in a room together one whole night.”

“No sin, but a kind action in the case of timid lovers. As lawful as for one to help an ass out of a pit, or show a man astray the path to safety,” laughed the priest. “Wallahi, thus I see it! What say you, O neighbours?”

“No sin; a kindness and a pleasant jest! Return and tell us how things go, O lady!”

“A good idea, by Allah! Aye, by the Holy Cross, a plan that will not fail. After that she will be glad enough to be his bride.”

Cheered by the applause and laughter which her scheme evoked, Jemîleh started on her homeward way. She met the small khawâjah, looking downcast. He inquired after her brother. Fâris, being out of danger, had been moved to his own home, and the small khawâjah thought that she had been to visit him. He was going to pass on, when she said

pointedly: "I hear that you are going to leaf us, sir."

"I must. I'm no longer wanted."

"Oh, no! Do not say that. Miss Elsie lufs you fery much. Only she is not herself these days; she is so worried by these other beeble and the way they talk. She's fery broud. She knows she's acted silly. She thinks you hate her for it, and that's why she's cold. She lufs you more than anybody; that is truth. I think she'd die if you did go away."

The small khawâjah manifesting no displeasure, though looking much abashed at these disclosures, Jemîleh went on to advise—

"Don't treat her so resbectful, like you haf done. Take hold of her and tell her what you feel; don't let her sbeak. When all the others go to bed to-night you stay behind; it is the only way. You neffer get no chance when they're about."

A shade of haughtiness was on his face as he replied: "I see."

That evening the whole party sat in Elsie's upstairs sitting-room, of which the window was wide open, but the shutters closed. Jemîleh, in a corner, knitted lace. She kept debating whether she would have the courage verily to lock that door upon the lovers, supposing they remained alone together. At moments such an act of insurrection seemed beyond her strength, till she recalled the laughter of the priest and his companions, when she thought it feasible. As bedtime drew near, she lost those per-

sonal misgivings in an apprehension that the small khawâjah might go off as usual to his tent without the minute's private talk with Elsie which was all she needed.

Elsie was playing Halma with her aunt. The small khawâjah was engaged with Mr. Edison in a long and tedious disputation on the state of Europe, to which the Khawâjah Yûsuf contributed obsequious remarks from time to time—"Fery true." "That is quite right, sir." "I see you know what you are saying." "I wish that my son Barsi could be here to sbeak with you"—supporting both the disputants impartially and with the same enthusiasm. His eager interest alone appeared to keep them at discussion. Dr. Wilson dozed over an English journal. Mrs. Edison and the English nurse were doing needlework, emitting a remark but seldom. Jemîleh in her corner waited with a beating heart.

Mrs. Edison was first to say good-night. The nurse went with her. Then the Khawâjah Yûsuf took his leave. He had a long walk to his lodging in the village and, being constitutionally shy of darkness, had suborned old Abu Fâris to escort him thither with a lantern. His going stopped the long political debate. Dr. Wilson woke up with a start and rose, declaring he would go to bed, since he was so absurdly sleepy. Mr. Edison and the small khawâjah went and stood beside the table, observing the conclusion of the game of Halma. When that was finished, Miss Jane and Elsie also rose. Jemîleh

in a tremble saw the small khawâjah whispering to Elsie. Was he asking leave to speak with her alone? He blushed absurdly. If she asked him to walk out upon the terrace, then the plot had failed.

Jemîleh gathered up her work into a ball, said a demure good-night and slipped out of the room, to watch the issue from her bedroom doorway close at hand. Miss Jane went by to bed; then Mr. Edison. The couple were alone in Elsie's sitting-room. The door was shut.

Jemîleh stole up to the door on tiptoe and locked it with the key she had been fingering throughout the evening. They could not get out without breaking through the door, which opened inwards; and that would make a noise to bring the missionaries down on them. The window was quite twenty feet above the ground outside; the wall fell sheer beneath it. Jemîleh listened for a minute to the voices, the man's appealing and the woman's scornful; then, with a beating heart, retired to rest.

XXXVI

ON finding himself alone with Elsie, Fenn began in the most formal manner. Five minutes since he had been praying for this interview, yet now that it was granted him he was embarrassed to the point of stammering.

"I ought to go away," he said; "I have no business here and no excuse for staying on, except the pleasure which I find in being near you. But before I go I think it only fair to both of us to ask you the plain question: 'Will you marry me?' I put it bluntly. I am not what people call a lady's man."

There was a moment of dead silence, while his heart beat like a drum, ere Elsie, with her face averted, answered, in a manner of complete detachment—

"How can I marry a man who thinks that everything I do is wrong or silly, and does not believe as I do?"

"How do you know I don't believe as you do?"

"Haven't we talked enough upon that subject? I am sick of it."

"It is only outward, unimportant things on which we differ!"

"How can you say so? I believe that the hope of

man's salvation is through Christ alone, and you, I fear, do not, or you could never call it a mistake to try to spread the faith by every means."

"Even at the sword's point?" he questioned. "Well, I must confess I stop at that."

"You turn everything to ridicule! That's what I hate in you," cried Elsie; and she then went on to enumerate the various points which she detested in his character and conduct, gaining vehemence as she proceeded.

"Well, I asked you a plain question," was his answer to the long tirade. "My happiness in life depends on your reply."

"How can your happiness depend on such a worthless and misguided girl?"

"Misguided creatures call for guidance. And I may feel that I have a vocation in this particular case. If you must know, I find that you, with everything that you believe—or fancy you believe—and think and do, are necessary to my happiness. I learnt that while I was away. I love you and would give the world to get you, if you want the truth. I don't see why my views concerning missionaries need stand in the way. The only question should be: Do you care for me at all?"

"Of course your views on missionaries stand between us, since I am a missionary."

"You're not. And, if you really were, it wouldn't matter in the least. I have asked you a plain ques-

tion: Will you marry me? Say yes or no. I'll take your answer—for the present."

"No, then; since you insult me while you ask that question," cried Elsie in a towering rage. She hastened to the door and tried to open it.

"Some one has locked it on the outside," she exclaimed. "What shall I do?"

She burst out sobbing helplessly. He knelt before her; he took both her hands and, meeting no resistance, kissed them fervently. Then, in his exultation, words of passion came to him; he poured his heart out, and in a little while he had her in his arms. There was no question and no answer. She was his. He led her to the sofa and sat down beside her.

And then came her confession, brokenly. She had always known that she was somehow wrong—at least, not wrong, but not a proper missionary. She had had bright visions of what should be done, but when she strove to realize them, everything went wrong and turned to badness. She was lazy, taking rides with Fâris and the Sheykh Bakîr when she ought to have been at work among the people. She had meant to give it up about the time that Jack arrived, aware that she had lost her guiding light. Then Jack—and other people—had said things to anger her; she had regained her vision in a flash of pride. But it was not the same. Thenceforth she acted in defiance, just to prove the people wrong who doubted her religious zeal. And then— All this had come of it. She felt most miserable, but the way that

people talked had kept her pride inflamed. In many ways she always knew that he was right, as touching herself. In all material ways he had been right, but there were spiritual.

"You ought not to talk as you do sometimes, really! It does harm—makes people think that you believe in nothing. It has often made me sad, and angry too, to hear you talking as if all men had the lowest motives, and religion did not change them in the least. One ought not to lay stress, I think, on horrid facts. One ought to think of higher things, even—even if they're not quite true, as we perceive them. Don't take me up! I don't mean that exactly. I mean, even if the higher things seem inconsistent with the horrors which we see around us in the world. We ought to try to raise men up with nobler thoughts, to set up an ideal which should edify them, don't you think?" She held his hand appealingly, caressing it. "The mischief is, the wretched, cruel things in life are all so true. That is what worries me."

"I think you are quite right," Fenn answered, with due earnestness. "But in order to present a sound ideal to the world, you ought, I think, to search for truth—even material truth—with diligence, and welcome it wherever found. Some people, through star-gazing, lose their sight. I think you ought to welcome every disillusion as a great step forward on the road which every one is put into this world to tread."

"Oh, do you really think so?" Elsie whispered eagerly. "Now you are talking seriously. Why did you never talk to me like that before? I should be glad to think of it in that way. I thought I should be falling from the faith if I accepted certain facts. That's what they teach us. And I have been miserable. Eminch Khânum used to anger me when I went to see her because she thought and spoke quite candidly on every subject. You do believe in Christian teaching, don't you?"

"I do, according to my lights."

"But are your lights sufficient?"

"Of course they're not. I ask for yours as well."

"Mine are no good." Elsie began to cry. He took her in his arms and kissed her. She clung close to him, weeping in complete abandonment, like a tired child. She sobbed—

"There is a thing which worries me. Ever since that dreadful fight, when he behaved so bravely, I feel as if I ought to beg the Pasha's pardon. He has always been so kind to me, and he was wounded. Oh, I cannot tell you how I feel about it. It's all my fault. Yet he is horrible, a persecutor of the Christians. How can I ask his pardon? Yet I feel I must."

"Don't worry about that," Fenn murmured soothingly. "Just send and inquire after his health. He will quite understand. The Turks neither offer nor expect apologies. They are too proud. They never even plead their case before the world. The native

Christians make the most of theirs. Always remember that when you hear Turks accused."

To change a subject which distressed her, he remarked facetiously: "Do you know what the Consul said to me the other day?"

"No," murmured Elsie, with her handkerchief to her eyes. "Something horrid, I am sure. He hates me."

"My devotion, I suppose, was pretty evident. He called me a young fool, and advised me to fly for my life. 'That girl is hopeless,' he informed me. 'She'll always have some craze or other. This time it was missionizing. Next time it'll be Christian science or votes for women. I've seen her kind before. They generally end up by becoming that which they at first most hated. This one will die a Muslimah, I shouldn't wonder!'"

"And what did you say?" questioned Elsie with keen interest.

"Well, I tried to make the idiot understand that I preferred a woman of some spirit, capable of strong enthusiasms, being myself a cynical and quiet person."

"You are nothing of the kind!"

"And as for your turning Mahometan, I explained that that would interest me very much, because I like Mahometans and have studied their books a bit. Christian science and the case for woman's suffrage I have not investigated, but your enthusiasm for those subjects, supposing you became my wife, would

give me the opportunity and the incentive needed for their mastery."

"Whatever did he say?"

"Nothing. He shrugged his shoulders and departed."

"You ought not to have talked like that. That really was too cynical."

"I meant it and still mean it, heart's delight! I don't care what you believe or say or do—I mean I should be interested in it all and learn from it, so long as you are you, and I have got you for my own."

"Do you mean that?"

"I do most honestly."

Elsie of her own accord flung both her arms around his neck and kissed him. The action would have been unthinkable for both an hour before. Words were banished for a time as quite inadequate. Then, smoothing her apparel, Elsie said: "Do you know I always, from the first time when I saw you at my aunt's, knew somehow that it ought to end like this?"

"Did you indeed? Then you deserve sound punishment, for you have led me a wild dance since then."

"Now will you tell me just exactly what it is which makes you hate the missionaries?"

"No, I won't," he laughed. "There are much more profitable things to talk of now. Besides, I don't hate them; I think I rather love them."

"I rather hate them myself, all except my aunts."

That's why I wished to know your reasons. I have none," sighed Elsie. "I'm afraid I'm really wicked and malevolent."

"Then what must I be?" was the chuckled answer.

They spoke about the future. They would make their home in England, but come out every year in spring to Deyr Amûn. They would be together always and, without professing to do good, would try to do no harm to any one.

"The lamp is going out," said Elsie suddenly.

"It doesn't matter. It is getting light already."

Fenn blew out the lamp, then, going to the window, pushed the shutters open. Elsie followed. The light of dawn was there before them, although the slope of Deyr Amûn remained immersed in night. The hills across the wady and the distant plain were coloured, though the stars still shone above them. The fir-trees on the terrace stood forth like cloaked watchers, seeming to shiver in the coolness which was like a breath. Innumerable cocks were crowing in the villages.

Together they knelt, leaning on the window-sill, watching the growth of light, the birth of colour, till Elsie's head drooped down upon Fenn's shoulder. She was tired out. Lifting her in his arms, he laid her on the sofa and arranged the cushions for her comfortably.

"I feel so happy," she informed him, and fell fast asleep.

"That girl shall never want for anything while I'm alive," Fenn muttered, apostrophizing not his sleeping lady, but the mental image of Jemîleh, who had locked that door.

THE END